



STATEMENT OF AT&T CONNECTICUT

Regarding Raised House Bill No. 5682 An Act Concerning High Speed Broadband Access Before the Energy and Technology Committee March 3, 2008

Proposal:

Raised House Bill No. 5682 would require the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) to form a public-private partnership to implement a comprehensive strategy to bring high speed Internet access to all consumers and businesses and to increase technology literacy and adoption.

Comments:

AT&T is the leading provider of broadband service in the country with over 14.2 million broadband customers. We offer a variety of speeds and pricing options for our customers. Connecticut ranks as one of the states with the highest broadband availability in the country and according to the FCC's most recent report on broadband, there were more than 1.2 million broadband lines in the state of Connecticut as of the end of 2006.

AT&T supports the intent of and language found in Raised House Bill No. 5682.

We understand that policymakers, consumers and others want to see more widespread broadband availability and adoption. Yet achieving those goals will require accurate information on availability, greater technology literacy and use by more consumers, and ultimately greater demand for broadband by more consumers. It is a complicated topic which does not lend itself to easy solutions or quick fixes; simply put it needs a multi-faceted effort involving the entire spectrum of interested stakeholders.

The language found in Raised House Bill No. 5682 is closely modeled after successful proposals which are already in-place and working in other states. We commend the committee for following this successful model. There are a number of important areas covered by the proposal, including the following:

- The legislation before you rightly recognizes that broadband adoption is an economic development, not a regulatory issue. Broadband has been preempted from state regulation by the Federal Communications Commission. Thus, directing the work of the proposed law to DECD, not the DPUC properly treats broadband as what it is: an unregulated, highly competitive product with important economic development ramifications.
- The bill encourages participation in the public/private partnership by the vast array of groups which have an interest in broadband availability: state agencies, technology groups, economic development groups, health care providers, broadband providers, educators, etc.

- The bill ensures that broadband providers will not have to comply with unusual or highly costly requests for data and ensures that any data provided will not be subject to the state's Freedom of Information requirements; this is particularly important since data which will be requested is highly proprietary.
- The bill will create a comprehensive inventory of services available today, including gaps in availability down to the census block level.
- The legislation addresses the demand side of the equation of broadband adoption by surveying consumers to identify barriers to entry and through efforts to ensure greater computer ownership.

Conclusion:

AT&T supports the passage of Raised House Bill No. 5682 and urges the committee to adopt it as introduced.