

February 29, 2008

TO: Representative Roberta B. Willis
House of Representatives
Sixty-Fourth District

FROM: Kathleen M. Friedman
19 Lambert Road
Sharon, CT 06069

RE: High-Speed Broadband Access

Since June 2006, my husband John Friedman and I have been investigating all potential means of obtaining access to high-speed Internet, and struggling with the inefficiencies of dial-up.

Our home is three-eighths of a mile off Route 41 south in Sharon, CT. We are out of range for DSL, whose AT&T office on Hospital Hill Road is between three and four miles from us. We have researched satellite possibilities, in particular Wild Blue, the vendor providing service for AT&T. We have concluded that in our case Wild Blue would be a potentially costly experiment, as no one can quantify for us the restrictions that their "fair access policy" might impose on our use of the Internet, and variations in weather in Northwest Connecticut can interfere with satellite efficiency. In addition, only after a period of use can it be determined if the technology is working well in a given situation and by then the customer is locked into a contract and the proud owner of the system.

Finally, we have been in contact with Comcast, and their technicians have been to our home, in June of 2006 and in the fall of 2007. What is especially frustrating for us is that at present residents along Route 41 south are served by Comcast, as are residents on sections of our road, Lambert Road, behind us. According to a letter, dated January 8, 2008, to the Honorable Roberta B. Willis from John Bairos and Robert Earley of Comcast, our house is 0.46 miles from the termination of Comcast's cable plant, servicing residences around ours. Their letter further describes their compliance with regulations and statutes governing cable operators in our region, including their right to recover the cost to them of extending service to us, a "reduced" figure of \$3,534.49, factoring in a credit of \$1,400. offered by Comcast. The situation feels inherently absurd, even surreal. Here we are, surrounded by the technology, midway between New York and Boston, watching wireless technology advance by leaps and bounds, and yet finding it is just beyond our reach because one of the giants, Comcast, has the last word as to access and

pricing, and is allowed to operate without competition. How did this happen?

My husband, John Friedman, is an award-winning filmmaker and writer. In 1989, just before we moved to Sharon, he was a producer of the film that took the Oscar for Best Documentary Feature; in 2006, another film opened at Lincoln Center's Human Rights Film Festival. He has just completed a non-fiction book to be published by Random House in early summer, and is in talks with the History Channel for what could be a major documentary feature film. I am a writer and editor, who must work from home, more so as I have recently been diagnosed with a bone marrow failure disease that causes low immunity to infection and restricts my ability to safely interact with large numbers of people. My husband's colleagues are in New York, scattered around the country, and abroad. It is increasingly difficult and frustrating for him to lack the access to high-speed broadband that our neighbors just down the road enjoy. Often, he has to use computers outside our home and in New York. Colleagues and friends elsewhere are bemused, and it has even become the subject of jokes. We are very much looking forward to some solution to the situation, which would seem moreover to be in the best interests economically, educationally, and socially of our region, currently disadvantaged by our isolation from the technology that connects our world.