

# THE ENERGY & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

## House Bill 5682: AAC High Speed Broadband Access

March 3, 2008

Testimony of the

Department of Public Utility Control

Chairman Donald W. Downes

The Department of Public Utility Control (DPUC) supports the passage of Raised Bill No. 5682 with the following changes. The DPUC believes this proposal will serve to expand the deployment of broadband services in Connecticut. As we sit here today, broadband has become the communications imperative of our time. Consumers that have access to broadband also have access to top-quality information in the fields of health, finance, law, and a myriad of other areas. Those without such access are being left behind and are regrettably likely to find themselves with little hope of catching up. The DPUC has consistently been supportive of policies to encourage broadband deployment among cable and telecommunications companies.

The DPUC respectfully submits that it along with the Department of Economic and Community Development should be jointly responsible to "enlist a public-private partnership to implement a state-wide high speed internet deployment strategy and adoption initiative to ..." As the Committee is aware, the DPUC has gained extensive technical experience with broadband issues particularly with the deployment of the necessary facilities for high speed internet access through our investigation of the Southern New England Telephone Company, Verizon New York<sup>1</sup> and Comcast/Lakeville f/k/a AT&T Broadband/Lakeville<sup>2</sup>. With this change, the DPUC looks forward to the prospect of taking a more active role in contributing to increasing the State's broadband opportunities than initially contemplated in HB 5682.

The DPUC also recommends that section 3 of the proposed bill be amended to add a new subsection (3) which addresses the minimum broadband download and upload speeds. In particular, the DPUC suggests that this new section establish the minimum download and upload speeds of 1.5 mbps and 384 kbps respectively. At the same time, it should also encourage and provide incentives to internet access providers to offer Connecticut consumers the download and upload speeds currently enjoyed by users in Europe, Japan and South Korea.

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<sup>1</sup> Docket No. 05-06-12, DPUC Investigation of the Terms and Conditions under Which Video Products May Be Offered By Connecticut Incumbent Local Exchange Companies.

<sup>2</sup> Docket No. 01-04-03, Application of AT&T Broadband/Lakeville for Modification of its Franchise Agreement.

Finally, the DPUC believes that this bill should be more explicit in terms of providing funding for facility deployment in the underserved areas. In a recent recommended Decision for the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), from the Federal-State Board on Universal Service (Joint Board), the Joint Board suggested that the states offer matching funds to providers in order to receive additional funding above those received from the proposed Federal Broadband Fund in order to further broadband deployment. The DPUC suggests that the current section 3(4) be amended to encourage funding from the Federal Universal Fund (USF) and that the State matching funds be made available to exceed any broadband funds provided for by the FCC.

In conclusion, it is critical that we keep trying to spread the use of broadband technology. As a result, the DPUC supports the intent of this proposal and looks forward to its success in our State.