

March 5, 2009

Public Hearing on Raised House Bill 6604

To the Members of the Energy and Technology Committee:

The Cox Cable Advisory Council of the Manchester Franchise supports House Bill 6604. Overall, the bill addresses many of the funding concerns that our council has raised in the past two years. Due to increased competition from the franchising of State-wide Video Service Providers, many of the guarantees of funding and our rights of oversight have been threatened.

Our Cable Advisory Council takes our right to provide input on the Public Access Television process very seriously. We are supportive of the addition of Section 1 in the Bill. After consultation with our Cox representative, we interpret this section as an addition of "mediation" responsibilities to the existing cable antenna television advisory council. We do not interpret this as the creation of a separate council. We would not support the formation of separate councils. Please clarify this distinction.

Our current agreement with Cox Communications allows the Council to advise, not mediate, disputes. Our Council only acts as a mediator in cases of scheduling conflicts.

Our Council interprets has no opinion on Sections 2 and 3. Employees of community access providers are welcomed guests at our meetings who are allowed to speak during public comment. Our Council would like to clarify that Subsection (c) of the legislation is not allowing exception to Subsection (b). If the community access provider is also the community antenna television company, our Council would not support these sections.

Section 4 is the portion of the Bill that the Cable Advisory Council supports very strongly. This section continues funding for community access operations that supplied original programming from locally run operations. This section is vital guaranteeing support of public access.

We also encourage you to enact Section 7 which ensures the continuation of community access channels. We also support Section 8 which sets video quality standards after Interconnection.

Our Advisory Council has no opinion on Section 9. It is a situation that we have not encountered.

We support the biennial performance review proposed in Section 10. Currently, no review exists, since most cable operators are now exempt from the franchising process. However, we encourage the Committee to go further and invoke the requirements of Sec 16-331. We would like to see additional requirements a community needs assessment and a public hearing for members of the franchise.

The Council also supports Section 11 and 12.

Thank you for your time,
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