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March 9, 2010

**Testimony for the Committee on Energy and Technology  
Co-Chairs Vickie Nardello and John Fonfara**

**IN SUPPORT of SB-417, An Act Concerning Call Centers and the Timely Repair of Public Utility Poles**

Co-chairs, members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to speak today in favor of SB-417. I believe this legislation could help improve customer service for telecommunications consumers by giving consumers more of a say in their transactions with the companies.

Last September I was opening an office in downtown Bridgeport on Fairfield Avenue. My colleague and I selected AT&T as the provider of our phone and internet service. We contacted AT&T on August 31 to request service, and were told that service would be turned on September 7<sup>th</sup>, and that we should have someone there that day to give a technician access to the building to check the phone lines.

On the 7<sup>th</sup>, no one showed. At 4:30 I called the customer support number and asked when the technician would be by to turn on our service. The person with whom I spoke was unaware of why there might be any delays in Fairfield County, and put in a request for a technician to come the next day.

When the technician finally arrived the day after that, he said that the lines were set up properly at our office already, and our service should start working by that evening. When it was not, I called customer service again and they said to wait just a little bit longer.

When I called in the morning on the 10<sup>th</sup>, the service representative I spoke with asked me what state I was in, and said that the problem must be with a technical issue in the Bridgeport area, and that they would put in a request to have our service turned on and that it should start working that day.

By the 11<sup>th</sup>, neither phone nor internet service were working, so I called customer support again. They asked me which state I was in again, and said they would have a technician sent out that Monday. Of course, the technician arrived Tuesday the 15<sup>th</sup>. They checked the phone and DSL lines again, and determined, as the technician who had come there before him had, that the lines were properly wired and the problem was external. I said I have spoken with several people on the phone that week, who all assured me that we just needed a local technician to come set up the lines correctly. He said he would drive down the street to the closest AT&T service office and make sure the service was turned on there. Finally, it was turned on.

If this story is confusing, it is because this was an unnecessarily complicated and drawn out problem over a small issue. All along it turned out that our phone and DSL service had simply been neglected to be turned on by a local office, a problem that could have been discovered much more readily by a local representative who was familiar with local conditions and in communication with local technicians. Because the service representatives we spoke with were clueless as to local conditions, they simply

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miss-diagnosed the issue over and over and missed the opportunity to get my phone service turned on in a timely fashion.

These companies keep sending jobs out of the state and sometimes over seas, and it just causes problems for the consumer. We were without phone and Internet service unnecessarily for almost two weeks. For us, that just meant lost business and delays in our operations. Fortunately, our safety or wellbeing were not jeopardized by an inability to make and receive calls, but I am certain that is a risk for residential clients on occasion. It may seem cheaper for these companies to send these jobs elsewhere, but there is a cost to us, the customers, in their doing so.

It is only fair to give customers some control over the product they are purchasing, and that is what SB-417 does. Had I been given the opportunity to deal with a local representative, we might have figured out the issue days sooner and I would have had phones working in my office sooner. As a customer, I want that choice.

I urge passage of SB-417 and hope you will give consumers the chance to have their customer service issues addressed locally.

Thank you.