

Testimony on Raised Bill No. 6460
Energy and Technology Committee
Public Hearing Held March 3, 2011

We are in favor of Raised Bill No. 6460 with a few concerns. First, Section 3, subsection (a) should not include the new language "provided a certified competitive video service provider shall not collect from its subscribers the amount required pursuant to subsection (k) of section 16-331a until such provider has an interconnection agreement with the incumbent community antenna television company." We feel that this language takes away any incentive for the two parties to facilitate an interconnection agreement, especially on the part of the competitive video service provider. By having the competitive video service provider collect and keep these funds in an escrow account, the more incentive there is for the competitive video service provider to come to an agreement with the incumbent community antenna television company.

Our second concern is with funding of labor and staff in Section 4, subsection (b). This section refers to the PEGPETIA grant process. This fund was created to insure that producers would have funds available for capital and equipment purchases to facilitate community access programming. Funding labor and staff for a small facility which may otherwise not be able to rely on volunteer labor is fine, but larger facilities probably already include funding for labor and staff in their budgets and probably should be excluded from this provision.

The Department of Public Utility Control has consistently stated in public hearings concerning Cable Area 2 that it believes the current legislation only allows for subscriber funds to be used for capital and equipment and if funding for labor and staff was to be considered, then legislation by the state and/or federal government was needed. We feel that language for funding of labor and staff should be included in Section 1 or Section 2 of Raised Bill No. 6460 as well as in the PEGPETIA portion of this bill.

Communities throughout Connecticut are being forced to provide more with less funds; raising taxes, for them, is not an option, it is a necessity; therefore, our residents need to understand the reasoning behind their town budgets and that is provided through government

access programming whereby citizens who are unable to attend a town meeting can still interpret for themselves what officials are doing and thinking. The only way for these programs to continue in most communities is through capital and equipment purchases as well as labor and staff funding via subscriber dollars from all companies licensed to provide either cable, video or any other means of broadcasting that may come to the state in the future.

This legislation helps to insure that those communities that have or wish to develop community access programming will be able to do so by providing for the funds to purchase much needed equipment and, hopefully, the labor to produce the programs. We feel that government transparency is more important today than it has ever been and this legislation assists in doing just that.

We urge that this bill be approved and sent to the legislature for adoption.

Submitted by:

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