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Statement before the Energy & Technology Committee
RE: HB 6402 An Act Modernizing the State's Telecommunications Laws
February 21, 2013

Technology is the key to providing better healthcare and more independence for seniors. As more advanced Internet technologies spread across the country, the benefits to older Americans grow. Today, the opportunities to live longer independently, to reduce health care costs, and to improve the quality of healthcare are all possible through the use of telemedicine.

The only way to ensure these opportunities can be maximized is to update our laws and keep them in step with the needs of our citizens. Outdated laws in Connecticut mean that resources that could be invested in expanding our broadband networks are instead used for antiquated technology. Examining our laws and confirming that they apply today will help bring telemedicine to our friends and loved ones. For this reason, I support House Bill 6402, An Act Modernizing the State's Telecommunications Laws.

As the chairman of the New Canaan Health and Human Services Commission, I see first hand how seniors can use new technologies to lead happier and healthier lives.

Currently, ten New Canaan seniors are participating in the New Canaan Video Tele-Health Wellness Pilot Program that uses new technology to record and track their health. The program utilizes 5 ATI-branded medical grade tele-systems and 10 iPads to test vital signs, monitor blood pressure and allow weekly videoconferences with medical professionals.

By utilizing new technology to obtain important health information, seniors are able to stay healthy -- and stay away from their doctor's office and the hospital.

Giving seniors the ability to remain in their homes longer and live independently gives them a sense of security and pride. At a very basic level, seniors can use their broadband connections to order prescriptions online and have them delivered to their homes. This saves them time and provides convenience, especially for those with mobility issues.

However, the benefits increase dramatically from there. Through the use of telemedicine, seniors can monitor their wellness from home and communicate with their healthcare providers without having to make multiple trips to the doctor. In 2012, it was estimated that ten million patients received medical care through telemedicine, which was double the number from three years ago. And according to the FCC, this type of service reduces the number of in-person consultations needed and can reduce medical costs by 25 percent for seniors. Telemedicine also reduces the number of days people spend in the hospital by 25 percent and decreases hospitalizations by 19 percent. As broadband networks and the utilization of telemedicine grow, the savings increase dramatically, especially for seniors.

Broadband also significantly helps seniors who need specialty care. According to the American Telemedicine Association, patients with congestive heart failure who used telemedicine reduced overall hospital admissions by 60 percent, emergency visits by 66 percent and pharmacy use by 59 percent.

Through the use of telemedicine, seniors can live happier, healthier lives—all while maintaining their independence and saving money. Still, we must remember that none of this is possible without broadband networks. By updating laws and investing in these, our family, friends and loved ones will benefit from all the services available through the Internet.

James L. Lisher
Chairman
New Canaan Health & Human Services Commission