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Utilities Commission
Town of New Canaan

February 21, 2013

Connecticut General Assembly, Energy & Technology Committee

*Testimony in Support of
Raised House Bill No. 6402 An Act Modernizing the State's Telecommunications Laws and
Raised Senate Bill No. 888 An Act Concerning Wireless Broadband*

My name is Geoff Pickard I am a retired marketing executive and a volunteer on the Town of New Canaan's Utility Commission. I am pleased on behalf of the Commission to offer our support for two bills under your consideration, House Bill No. 6402 and Senate Bill No 888.

As we have all become acutely aware, communications in general and wireless service in particular, is no mere luxury. At times following the storms which have battered our state in recent years, wireless service has in many cases been the only connection that residents, businesses, elected officials and even first responders have been able to rely upon in order to communicate. Beyond just following storms, wireless service is a necessity every day in today's fast-paced, global economy as are other communications services, in particular broadband services.

The residents and town of New Canaan recognize the importance of improving service and have identified that as a major local priority for our community. We have been working with the wireless industry and other communications providers toward that end and are encouraged by their efforts to improve service overall and specifically with their plans for our town.

We support both House Bill 6402 and Senate Bill 888 because they will help to improve communications capabilities in our state and local communities. With respect to HB 6402, this legislation will eliminate old and unnecessary rules which siphon investment away from new technologies. Put simply, policymakers should be focused on maximizing private investment to expand the nation's broadband infrastructure, not on preserving yesterday's technologies and rules.

Senate Bill No. 888 is of particular interest to us. In allowing wireless towers to be located in watershed lands - with appropriate care taken for protection of such land - this bill will enable the wireless industry to remove so-called "dead-spots" and coverage gaps which plague too many areas of the state, including notably New Canaan. In point of fact, one wireless provider has been attempting to locate a new tower to serve the northern part of New Canaan. The area is made up of residential neighborhoods and watershed lands. Nearby property owners have expressed concern about building in their neighborhood but current laws prohibit the provider from instead building the tower in the watershed which would allow it to be shielded while at the same time providing much needed service. The common-sense approach seems to be embodied in this legislation and that is to allow these facilities in such lands.

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to testify in support of both of these important bills. I strongly urge their favorable approval by your committee.