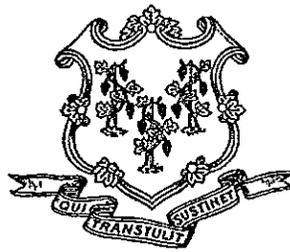


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February 21, 2013

Testimony to the Energy and Technology Committee
SB 657: An Act Concerning Consumer Protection of Cable Television And Video Service Customers

Senator Duff, Representative Reed, and members of the Energy and Technology Committee:

My name is Beth Bye, State Senator for the 5th district, representing West Hartford, Farmington, Burlington, and Bloomfield.

I come to you today in support of SB 657. This bill will increase transparency in pricing and billing for Video and Internet Services and task the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) to hold providers accountable for customer satisfaction. By making a few small changes to current statutes we can have a measurable impact in protecting consumers from unclear and unfair practices. These changes will help encourage more honest competition between providers and ensure improved customer service.

- **Consumers deserve to know what they're getting, and what the actual cost is, when they purchase a service.** Current advertising and billing practices by Cable Television, Internet and Video Service providers can be deceptive. Rate changes and special terms are hidden in the fine print, and advertisements and bills can be indecipherable.
- **Consumers need a place to turn when they have complaints and questions about service.** When consumers encounter unfair practices, they do not know where to turn. If they make their way to OCC or the Attorney General, they are currently directed to contact PURA, which also regulates the Gas, Water, and Electric utilities. However, unlike these other services, PURA doesn't have the capacity or leverage to review the performance of companies providing Video and Internet services beyond issuing their annual scorecard. Currently, Cable ranks second to worst, even with consumers not having information about how or where to lodge complaints. In many other states, Cable and Video services are managed separately from other utilities. In Massachusetts, for example, complaints about Cable and Video services are managed through the Department of Telecommunications and Cable (DTC). The DTC, unlike PURA, is empowered to both issue consumer protection guidelines, and enforce them. And it only deals with telecommunications.
- **Cable and Video Service providers need to be able to be held accountable when service is inadequate or practices are unfair.** In current statute, certified competitive video service provider franchises are not granted on a time limited basis. There is no standard they need to meet for licensure. Requiring franchise renewal every five years, subject to performance review by the PURA, would allow companies to be held accountable for questionable or

deceptive practices. This would take full advantage of the resources PURA already has to offer, such as reporting of customer complaints about service and pricing.

This bill is simply asking for transparency in pricing, clear information for consumers who experience difficulties with service providers, and accountability. I hope you will join me in supporting this important legislation.

Thank you.