



## State of Connecticut

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#### Testimony in Support of HB 5249

#### An Act Concerning Wireless Internet Availability on the New Haven Line of the Metro-North Commuter Railroad

#### Transportation Committee

February 13, 2013

Good morning, Chairmen Maynard and Guerrero, Ranking Members Boucher and Scribner, and former fellow members of the Transportation Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB 5249.

This bill would require that wireless access to the Internet be provided to Metro-North passengers and would allow that access to be provided by private contractors at their own expense. The private contractor's involvement and investment would mean that there would be no increase in state spending and therefore no cost to taxpayers.

I have proposed the bill in response to requests from many constituents who commute to work on Metro-North trains every day. While commuting a long distance is difficult, one of the reasons commuters prefer mass transit to driving their own cars is that this allows them to work during their trip. Internet access provides commuters an additional incentive to take the train. Many railroads around the world offer wi-fi, and Metro-North, the busiest rail line in the country, should be able to do the same.

I am aware that Metro-North issued an RFP for Internet service in 2010 and that it has entered into discussions with a third-party provider. These have not yet, however, led to an implementation plan or final agreement. Meanwhile, there is high demand among rail commuters, who have been recently subjected to significant fare increases and feel justified in asking for service levels commensurate with those of more modern rail lines.

I recognize that it is not strictly necessary to pass new legislation to make wi-fi available to Metro-North passengers. Nevertheless, given the high demand for the service, I respectfully encourage the Committee to explore legislative action that could introduce a sense of urgency into the process.