



## **Citizens Television, Inc.**

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### **TESTIMONY**

#### **PUBLIC HEARING BY THE CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY HARTFORD, CT., TUESDAY, MARCH 4, 2014**

I am Joseph L. Schofield, Executive Director of Citizens Television, Inc. (CTV), the public access center for New Haven, Hamden and West Haven, CT., and which serves more than 60,000 households.

I testify today in support of S.B. 135, H.B. 5172, and H.J. 18, all of which would restore and protect hereforward the tax dollars of cable subscribers collected solely for the capital equipment needs of schools, municipalities and public access centers in Connecticut through the PEGPETIA fund managed by the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA).

Operational funding for public access centers is provided through cable subscriber fees that are set by PURA and only increased annually according to the Consumer Price Index. Effectively, CTV has not had a real increase in its funding in twelve years, and its spending power is 37% less today than it was in 2002. Given that, CTV, in the midst of the industry's digital transition and still using analog equipment first purchased in 1992, could not have afforded to make that transition were it not for the PEGPETIA fund. That incomplete transition has now been extensively delayed by the State Assembly's appropriating the fund for fiscal years 2014 and 2015, coming after a recent appropriation by the current governor in 2012 and by the previous governor as well.

No small reason why I voted for Governor Malloy was his pledge as a candidate on a CTV interview program that he would not raid the PEGPETIA fund, which his predecessor had recently done. Well, now he has done it three times, and the effects ripple economically. The unavailable funds have resulted in the loss of two full time staff positions at CTV, one through attrition and another through delayed availability. Without PEGPETIA funding, CTV cannot purchase the equipment that would provide a sufficient workload for those staff positions. Ironically, the sheer existence of even an empty PEGPETIA fund precludes CTV from using restricted and earmarked operating funds for capital purchases.

As 501(c)(3) organizations, many third-party public access centers conduct fundraising events to supplement their budgets. CTV is fortunate in that its size alone affords it funding substantially higher than most other centers. But then its operating costs are higher as well. The fate that all such public access centers suffer is that foundations and other potential resources will generally not fund areas that they feel are the responsibility of the government to fund. This is in part what motivated the push for establishing the PEGPETIA fund, so that public access centers and schools would have a designated, restricted resource for funding its capital equipment needs.

I respectfully urge the members of the CT General Assembly to restore all monies to the PEGPETIA fund and to enact legislation that will protect against its future seizure, sweep or appropriation.

Joseph L. Schofield  
Executive Director  
Citizens Television, Inc.