

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 568
Energy and Technology Committee Public Hearing
February 19, 2015

Senator Doyle, Representative Reed, and members of the Energy and Technology Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify on this important issue.

I am here today to speak in support of SB 568, An Act concerning Telecommunication Towers, a bill I introduced in response to concerns brought to me by a number of my constituents in Meriden and Cheshire. This bill is, in essence, about due diligence and good government. My proposal is that Connecticut's Siting Council be required to hold a public hearing on all cell tower construction. Additionally, this bill requires that multiple locations be considered for all cell tower projects.

In Meriden, sixty-nine residents signed a petition asking that they be granted a public hearing for the plans of a cell tower due to be erected in a residential area of Murdock Avenue. The plan was to have the tower disguised in an existing barn silo structure, leading the CT Siting Council to decide against holding a public hearing. While it is their prerogative to make this decision, it was very upsetting to local residents who feel their voices were silenced on an issue that affects their community. A public hearing, like the one we are participating in today, allows for all parties to present their opinions, allowing elected officials to make an informed and appropriate decision based on all available information. I believe this same privilege should be extended to concerned parties when deciding on the location of a new cell tower, regardless of whether it is a new structure or being placed within an existing one. Giving people the opportunity to have their voices heard will result in better outcomes, and allow residents to feel more comfortable with the decisions made about their community.

Requiring the consideration of multiple locations is another way of furthering this goal of transparency and best practices in Connecticut's Siting Councils. While it is currently standard policy to consider three or more locations, this full due diligence is not always carried out. A new cell tower was recently proposed in a residential area of Cheshire. It was reported to me that during the field review, only one site was thoroughly vetted.

Declining to hold public hearings and not giving full consideration to multiple sites does not promote informed decision making and erodes the public trust. Senate Bill 568 seeks to remedy these problems by bringing the same kind of transparency and good governance practices that we embrace here in the General Assembly.

I urge you to give favorable consideration to Senate bill 568. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony this afternoon.