

Trumbull Community Television (TCT) supports the proposed HB 6437 - An Act Concerning Community Access Television. Once enacted, this bill will “stabilize funding for Public Access Television.”

Representative David Rutigliano (R-123) knows well the benefits TCT provides to the Trumbull community he represents. His proposed bill assigns certain amounts paid by electronic communications services subscribers for services transmitted via wires utilizing the public right of way in order to underwrite increased public access programming.

Maintaining public access programming on community cable television systems across the state will provide our citizens a local voice. It will also offset an impending funding cliff due to the growing number of cable television subscribers who are terminating their service by “cutting the cord.”

Trumbull Community Television is a volunteer committee responsible for all aspects of the operation of Trumbull’s education channel. We also value the significant role played by the regional public access channel.

TCT recently made its programs more available by creating an Internet-based Video-On-Demand system. VOD enables anyone with a broadband connection to view programming via the Internet - think grandparents in Florida watching a middle school concert. We believe that this can be a model for delivery of public access channels to viewers with a broadband connection; however currently these viewers contribute nothing to funding these services.

As we look ahead at the changing landscape of digital communication, the growing threat to cable television is cord cutting, or disintermediation - subscribers are replacing cable television with Internet based programming, whether it be Apple TV, Netflix, Hulu, all of which provide more flexible and user defined channel choices, or individual channel buys, such as HBO Go and NBC TV.

Since its inception cable television - as well as broadband Internet service - have accessed individual residences using the public right of way - for which consumers have always paid. The proposed legislation simply assigns a portion of that revenue to expand the capability of public access television.

For this there are two rationales. The first is substantive, the proposed funding will create more opportunities for new community and subscriber driven programming. This might be a community leader interviewing important and respected leaders on current topics about health, education, or senior services. It might be entertainment specials - community members who perform, perhaps a dancer, a singer, even a poet.

The other is financial. TCT is concerned that as cord cutting gains ground - which appears inevitable, if not imminent, funding for public access TV will degrade to the point that these channels will cease to exist.

TCT supports HB 6347 to assure the longer term funding of public access television and its attendant enhancement of local access to the public airwaves.

On behalf of Trumbull Community Television

Kate Donahue, Administrative Chairman

Roy Fuchs, Programming Chairman

Byron Campbell, Technical Chairman

John Annick, Past Chairman

Jim Lang, Past Vice Chairman