

**Testimony before the Energy & Technology Committee**

**West Hartford Deputy Mayor and University of Connecticut Trustee**

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**February 10, 2015**

**Proposed S.B. No. 572, AN ACT CONCERNING GIGABIT INTERNET  
ACCESS**

Good afternoon Senator Doyle, Representative Reed, and members of the Energy & Technology Committee. I am here today in support of Senate Bill 572, both in my role as West Hartford's Deputy Mayor, and as a Trustee as the University of Connecticut. I am very pleased to discuss the Connecticut Municipal RFQ, which you've heard about today.

I am proud to say that I have been part of this effort from the beginning. It is clear to me that bringing high-speed "Gig" internet access to our citizens is not a "nice to have" but a "must have" for Connecticut. It is essential if we are going to compete with other communities and states that are investing in high-speed networks, including places like Chattanooga, Tennessee; Kansas City, Kansas AND Missouri; Wilson, North Carolina; and Santa Rosa, California. Our businesses, our universities, and our citizens are demanding that we bring them higher speeds at lower costs. With other parts of the country creating fiber

networks that deliver a Gig at around \$70 per month, we simply have to move quickly if we are going to remain competitive.

I have four sons, so I am also thinking about the generations that are in school or just emerging into the labor market. Let's be honest: as we sit here during one of the snowiest Februarys on record, we may find our kids asking us, "Why do we live here?" And that of course leads to a question they will face as they think about their first job, which is "Should I stay here?"

We may not have the nicest beaches, at least not in February, or the best weather, but we do have some of the best schools and the best educated workers in the country. We should also have the best infrastructure, the most opportunities, the best jobs, and the most innovative, entrepreneurial economy in the country, so that our children understand that this is a fabulous place to start a career and raise a family.

Having low-cost Gig networks in our communities is a necessary part of creating that innovative, entrepreneurial economy, and it's also what the next generation expects. They wake up with a smart phone in their hand, work on their laptops all day, and watch Netflix and Hulu at night. All of this requires bandwidth, lots of it, and it is incumbent on us to provide it if we want them to remain in Connecticut. The Connecticut Municipal RFQ is a unique path forward, which allows us to invest in the necessary fiber infrastructure without

having to front municipal money or float municipal bonds. It's creative, it's affordable, and it works.

That's why as the Deputy Mayor of West Hartford and a Trustee of UConn, I ask you to support this effort. I am amazed at how far we've come since we announced the RFQ in September, and how many towns have joined us, and how many more want to join us. It's an indicator of just how important this effort is to the state and to your constituents and mine.

I am also asking you to support Senator Looney's proposal to vest the Office of Consumer Counsel with legislative authority to lead this effort. They have organized the municipalities, created the documents, contacted providers, identified supporters like UConn and Jackson Labs, and helped get us to where we are today. I'd like to continue to work with them.

Thank you very much, and I'm happy to answer any questions.