

**TOWN OF WALLINGFORD**

**Testimony Submitted by Scott A. Hanley to the Energy and Technology Committee**

**In Support of Raised S.B. No. 286, LCO No. 2142**

**AN ACT CONCERNING THE PUBLIC, EDUCATIONAL AND GOVERNMENTAL  
PROGRAMMING AND EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY INVESTMENT ACCOUNT  
(PEGPETIA) GRANT PROGRAM AND MUNICIPALLY OPERATED EDUCATION  
AND GOVERNMENT ACCESS CHANNELS**

**March 1, 2016**

Senator Doyle, Representative Reed and members of the Energy and Technology Committee,

The Town of Wallingford (“Town”) supports Raised S.B. No. 286 as a means to permit the resumption of the PEGPETIA grant program as delineated by *Public Act 07-253, An Act Concerning Certified Competitive Video Service*. PEGPETIA is an exceedingly valuable mechanism to fund equipment and technology upgrades at Public, Educational and Governmental Access (“PEG”) operations, schools, libraries and governmental facilities throughout the state. The Town, as an operator of a government access channel, used the program during 2009 to upgrade meeting coverage capabilities. Since that time, the Town has been awaiting the restoration of the program to replace aging production and distribution equipment.

The Town fully acknowledges the State’s challenging financial situation and the need for predictable revenues. However, the Town reminds the Committee that the PEGPETIA dollars are collected from cable subscribers for the purpose of supporting local investment. When operational, the PEGPETIA grant program has had a real impact on the daily function of classrooms, libraries and community media operations. Unfortunately, many PEG programmers are now in jeopardy of not being able to fulfill their community obligations because PEGPETIA funds have been unavailable for equipment replacement. The Town contends that in order to attract and retain participants and viewers, local programmers must be able to produce and distribute content that is competitive in technical quality. This is especially important because PEG channels are not delivered in high definition on any

multichannel platform in our state. Remember, too, that multichannel providers remind subscribers on every bill just how much is assessed to support PEG and PEGPETIA. No other standard tier channel is associated with a monthly assessment on a customer's bill.

Regarding Section 2 of Raised S.B. No. 286, the Town acknowledges that Wallingford has benefited from a town-discrete government channel since the inception of cable television service during the early 1970s. Nevertheless, the Town is troubled by the language in Section 2 and its potential impact on all jurisdictions. The provision appears to advocate a process that bypasses the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) until penalties are sought for non-compliance. The Town believes that it is appropriate for PURA to oversee efforts to reassign management of town-discrete channels including those cases where the parties have consented to the change. As such, the Town cannot endorse Sections 2 (a) and 2 (b) as presently constituted.

The Town of Wallingford respectfully requests that the Committee support the intent of Raised S.B. 286, Sections 1 and 3, and seek a means to restore PEGPETIA within this year's budget deliberations.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Respectfully submitted,

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