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To: Energy and Technology Committee Members

From: Frank Facchini, Executive Director, Southeastern Connecticut Television, Inc.

Connecticut General Assembly ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

March 18, 2016

Raised SB 286 An Act Concerning the Public, Education, and Governmental Programming and Educational Technology Investment Account (PEGPETIA) Grant Program and Municipally Operated Education and Government Access Channels.

Section 1. – WE SUPPORT RESTORING THE PEGPETIA FUNDS

Southeastern Connecticut Television, Inc. is the Community Access Provider for the towns of Groton, Ledyard, North Stonington, Stonington, and Voluntown. We began operations in April of 2014 after overcoming a number of challenges. We were fortunate to have received a PEGPETIA grant from the Public Utility Regulatory Authority (PURA) which allowed us to replace a portion of the 25-year-old equipment from the previous community access studio that served the towns in our service area.

Without the funds from the PEGPETA grant, we would have started the new community access studio with equipment that was 25 years old and based on formats that were obsolete.

Most of the remaining equipment at our studio is more than 25 years old and well beyond its expected life. As the equipment breaks down, it is impossible to repair. Manufacturers no longer support equipment that is this old and replacement parts are no longer made. Formats and equipment have changed dramatically over the last 25 years.

High school students volunteer at the studio to gain valuable skills in television production and editing. If we teach students in outdated formats, they will not be able to utilize their skills in college or any job market.

The demand for our services has increased significantly in our almost two years of operation. People and organizations from all of the five towns in our service area regularly produce shows at our studio or at locations throughout our region.

We currently have 24 shows in production with topics including arts, education, politics, health and well-being, community events, government, history, local sports, festivals, original student screenplays and many more. Last year we produced a total of 378 shows. We are hoping our 25-year-old studio cameras and much of the equipment in our playback rack continue working until we can update it. We keep some of the equipment powered on at all times, otherwise it takes too long for it to warm up before it works properly.

The feedback we receive from the community is that our services are vital, and there is no other way to produce local programming that everyone can see on a local channel. It brings the community together, educates, informs, and entertains our viewers in Southeastern Connecticut.

Southeastern Connecticut Television respectfully requests the PEGPETIA funds be restored.

Section 2 – WE OPPOSE THIS SECTION OF THE BILL AND REQUEST ITS REMOVAL

There are already systems and staff in place at Community Access Studios to provide Public, Educational, and Government Access. Changing the legislation to allow individual towns to control the Education or Government Access Channels would duplicate an existing service and burden towns with the additional expense of staffing and equipment. This duplication of a service that is already in place does not make economic sense at a time when the state and towns are looking at ways to reduce spending.

Southeastern Connecticut Television respectfully requests the removal of Section 2 from this Raised Senate Bill.

Respectfully Submitted,

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