



# WESTPORT, CONNECTICUT

JAMES S. MARPE  
*First Selectman*

March 10, 2016

Connecticut General Assembly  
Planning & Development Committee  
Legislative Office Building, Room 2A  
Hartford, CT 06106

Via e-mail: [pdtestimony@cga.ct.gov](mailto:pdtestimony@cga.ct.gov)

RE: S.B. 331, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A HIGH-SPEED INTERNET SERVICE PILOT PROGRAM

Dear Committee Members:

As First Selectman of the Town of Westport, I support S.B. 331, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A HIGH-SPEED INTERNET SERVICE PILOT PROGRAM.

Westport recognizes the value of this seed capital investment from the State to start the process of developing plans and partners to build out a fiber network. I believe that local businesses and other financial sources will see the merit in supporting the proposal for this funding. I have heard from my constituents, in particular the many professionals who live and work in Westport, that they face continuing challenges obtaining affordable broadband at adequate speeds.

Westport has followed the CTgig Project and recognizes the potential of leveraging the State's matching grant program for a municipal broadband project in our town. We believe that using this seed funding, along with other local private funding, could be the foundation for a far larger investment by fiber network investors. The Pilot Program appears to be the fastest route to developing municipal fiber builds in Connecticut.

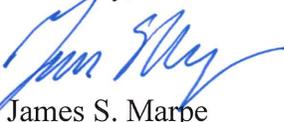
From a different perspective, telework and telecommuting, which require affordable, vibrant high-speed Internet access, should be part of Connecticut's transportation program. For every worker that can be productive without leaving his or her residence, one less car will be using the State's already overburdened roads and bridges. Westporters are particularly aware of the overburdened roads in our area since both the Merritt Parkway and Interstate 95 traverse our community.

Connecticut is at an economic disadvantage when compared to states like New York and Massachusetts that have well-funded and staffed state broadband agencies and substantial funding for municipal fiber network builds. In light of the \$500 million fund devoted to municipal fiber network development in New York, and the nearly \$100 million in actual fiber network construction that Massachusetts has pursued over the last decade, a corresponding commitment from Connecticut is clearly overdue. These investments are necessary to keep the State and its municipalities competitive.

The economic development and jobs creation issues facing Connecticut are obvious. Affordable high speed Internet access is a fundamental utility that is an essential and substantial physical element of any successful municipality.

Please support the passage of S.B. 331. Thank you.

Sincerely,



James S. Marpe  
First Selectman

cc: Senator Toni Boucher  
Senator Tony Hwang  
Representative Gail Lavielle  
Representative Jonathan Steinberg