



My name is John Bilda and I am the General Manager of Norwich Public Utilities (NPU), a four service, municipally-owned public utility. NPU strongly supports S.B.331, An Act Establishing A High-Speed Internet Service Pilot Program.

In addition to serving the residents of the City of Norwich with electric, water, natural gas and wastewater services, NPU has established a fiber network that reaches all corners of our city.

Today, NPU has more than 80 miles of fiber infrastructure installed throughout Norwich and we are uniquely positioned to leverage state funding made available through S.B. 331. Investments in the NPU fiber network would pay larger and quicker dividends than in any other community in the state, given considerable resources already in place in our service area.

As outlined in the bill, NPU is currently able to provide high-speed Internet service that is capable of increases to ten gigabit per second well within the five year window proposed in the bill. We would be prepared to quickly expand our fiber capabilities and to offer high-speed Internet to many businesses in our city, with an initial focus on the Norwich Business Park.

NPU has already established a strong partnership with the Backus Hospital in Norwich, providing fiber services and inter-facility connectivity across our city. This relationship is providing the hospital with high-quality broadband service and NPU with important technical and operational insights.

NPU believes that higher quality, faster Internet service can be a catalyst for economic development and educational progress, in Norwich and across Connecticut. As the Governor and General Assembly debate critical long-term and large investments in the state's transportation infrastructure, we believe that Connecticut must make the same type of investments in our digital infrastructure.

Should the State of Connecticut invest in a high-speed Internet pilot program, NPU would be ready, willing and able to deploy our existing infrastructure, workforce and tradition of exceptional customer service almost immediately.

We believe reliable, high-speed Internet access should be seen as a fifth utility, every bit as critical to a modern and growing community as gas, water, electric and wastewater services. S.B. 331 would be an important down payment for making this fifth utility the cornerstone of the Connecticut economy of tomorrow.