



Thank you for hearing my testimony today.

My name is Monica Webb, and I work for Ting Internet, a fiber-optic network builder and service provider that is investing millions in next generation infrastructure in communities across the country.

Fiber-optic infrastructure will one day be in every home, business and government building. Because of its capacity – which is orders of magnitude beyond copper or wireless – it's the backbone of all worldwide telecommunications and mobile networks. Given today's voracious and growing need for bandwidth and its impact on economic development and quality of life, municipalities are working hard to ensure their constituents will have access to next generation fiber broadband. And in Connecticut, your Office of Consumer Counsel and Broadband – which promulgated the municipal gain regulation – is working alongside your cities to put them on the leading edge of this digital infrastructure revolution.

I've seen what fiber-optic networks do for communities:

- I've witnessed businesses – large and small – flourish by taking advantage of modern enterprise applications, like HD videoconferencing, file sharing, seamless VPNs, cloud-based operations – all made possible by fiber.
- I've heard from companies, asking where we have fiber, to factor into their location decision making processes.
- I've seen residents run home businesses, telecommute, enable online educational tools and opportunities for their kids, and even take advantage of state-of-the-art home-based health care, all with fiber Internet.

The challenge is that building these networks is complex and expensive. The incumbent telecom and cable providers are building fiber only in new subdivisions, if even that.

However, there are a handful of ISPs like Ting today making investments in building fiber infrastructure past every premise. We have our choice of communities willing and eager to attract our investment, knowing their businesses and residents will reap significant benefits. So we look to states and communities taking steps to make the process of building a fiber network less difficult and costly. That means streamlined regulation and permitting; in particular around the unnecessarily onerous and costly utility pole make ready process, which currently deters fiber network investment. Your State Office of Consumer Counsel and Broadband has looked at this problem and created an effective and common-sense solution. Ting applauds that, and in

fact, signed a joint letter with 13 private companies and organizations, including Google, Netflix, Nokia, and the Telecommunications Industry Association, objecting to the undermining of that solution in RB-7011.

If Connecticut affirms the municipal gain statute – as it stands today – your state will become one of the most attractive places in the U.S. to build fiber networks.

On the flipside, if you pass this legislation as presented, you will put Connecticut back into competition for fiber investment with every other state and community in America. You will protect the profits of a few monopoly telecom and cable providers who haven't invested in fiber in your communities – and forfeit potential benefits of increased productivity of every other business in every other industry sector, and at the same time, impede quality of life for your constituents.

I'd like to also mention another side of this issue that is equally important, and with which I have personal experience. Connecticut has a number of rural communities without adequate broadband. I have a house in the Berkshires, about 20 minutes from the Connecticut border. It's been for sale for three years. One of the major reasons? It doesn't have broadband. In fact, rural communities throughout the region don't have access to broadband that meets the FCC definition.

What that means – beyond houses not selling – is population loss. Fewer jobs. Schools closing. Lower municipal tax bases. And in 2010, in Western Mass, we lost our own Congressional district. I've had to relocate to an area with broadband in order to do my job effectively. Last month, Susan Crawford, a renowned author and expert on the state of broadband in America, published a blog and referred to the lack of broadband as "killing the rural towns of Western Mass." Today I implore legislators, as stewards of the communities of Connecticut, to ensure the only thing that is killed on your watch is this regressive bill.

I thus urge you to reject RB-7011 and restrictions it seeks to place on the use of the unique statutory Municipal Gain. Today is the time to encourage investment in Connecticut; give industry and businesses of all sizes, a major tool to compete; enrich the delivery of government services, including education and healthcare; and ensure rural residents have access to critical broadband infrastructure.

Thank you. Please contact me with any questions:

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