

Connecticut General Assembly – Energy and Technology Committee

Legislative Office Building, Hartford, CT 06106

February 19, 2019

Re: SB 6 - AN ACT CONCERNING NET NEUTRALITY PRINCIPLES AND INTERNET PRIVACY

Dear Members of the Energy and Technology Committee:

My name is Supriyo Chatterjee and I work in the Healthcare & Technology sectors in the Hartford area. I am a member of the Practice Transformation Task Force – part of the major State Healthcare Innovation Model (SIM) project. I would like to submit this testimonial **in support of SB 6 – AN ACT CONCERNING NET NEUTRALITY PRINCIPLES AND INTERNET PRIVACY.**

I would like to emphasize the importance of ‘Net Neutrality’ principles and broadband access on healthcare.

As per FCC findings¹:

- a. Based on December 2015 broadband data, the least connected counties generally have the highest rates of chronic disease. Obesity prevalence is 25% higher and diabetes prevalence is 41% higher (an increase of 6 percentage points since the prior year) in these counties (i.e., where 60% of households lack broadband access and over 60% lack basic Internet at home.)
- b. The rural/urban gap appears to be growing - Rural counties are 10 times as likely as urban areas to be in low broadband access (below 50%), high diabetes areas (above 10%). These digitally isolated counties also experience physician shortages that are more than double the national average.
- c. In many “critical need” counties, broadband access levels and health metrics have worsened.

With ‘last mile’ problems in rural areas – diminishing ‘Net Neutrality’ principles may exacerbate health metrics and limit telemedicine² (contrary to FCC Commissioner Pai’s comment³). The American Academy of Pediatrics finds that paid fast lanes may let internet service providers charge higher fees for services⁴. This may add to healthcare costs and in another example: a clinician needs medical records from another source and is relying on telemedicine for delivery⁵. Broadband access is an important policy issue and limited provision of telemedicine services are prevalent⁶. With increasing healthcare services delivered by visiting nurses, community health workers, and other health services – reliable broadband access will be important for health outcomes and health equity⁷, and costs containment.

The State of Connecticut State Innovation Model (SIM) Healthcare project⁸ entails 'patient-centered medical homes', community health workers and population health programs. The SIM project lays the foundation of value-based healthcare delivery by lowering costs in Medicare and Medicaid programs. Implementing the programs will rely on cost-effective and dependable broadband access.

In summary, there is a need to acknowledge broadband access and its significance in healthcare. Changes in 'Net Neutrality' principles may affect healthcare settings, e.g., rural remote access, health data access, specialty electronic consultations⁹, provider services (e.g. visiting nurses, community health workers), population health interventions, and school-based health services. I urge the committee to consider passing the bill SB 6 for a healthy Connecticut.

Thank you,

Supriyo B. Chatterjee MSc MBA MA (Econ)

E: sb.chatterjee@gmail.com

C: 860.897.2261

¹ Mapping Broadband Health in America - FCC 2017 updated maps

<https://www.fcc.gov/health/maps>

² Net neutrality repeal threatens telemedicine - Modern Healthcare Nov 22, 2017

<http://www.modernhealthcare.com/article/20171122/NEWS/171129959>

³ FCC Chairman Ajit Pai: Net neutrality repeal will help telemedicine - Becker Hospital Review Dec 4, 2017

<https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/telehealth/fcc-chairman-ajit-pai-net-neutrality-repeal-will-help-telemedicine.html>

⁴ Now that net neutrality is dead, the question is: Will it help healthcare? – Healthcare IT News Dec 14, 2017

<https://www.healthcareitnews.com/news/now-net-neutrality-dead-question-will-it-help-healthcare>

⁵ ibid

⁶ Limited broadband stymies telemedicine adoption, Senate hears - Modern Healthcare Nov 7, 2017

<http://www.modernhealthcare.com/article/20171107/NEWS/171109908>

⁷ Emerging Trends Could Exacerbate Health Inequities In The United States - Health Affairs June 2017

<https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.2017.0011>

⁸ Connecticut State Innovation Model Initiative in Healthcare (CT SIM)

<https://portal.ct.gov/OHS/Content/State-Innovation-Model-SIM>

⁹ Reduced Cost Of Specialty Care Using Electronic Consultations For Medicaid Patients - Health Affairs December 2018

<https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.2018.05124>