

TESTIMONY OF TOM SWAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE CONNECTICUT CITIZEN ACTION GROUP (CCAG)
February 19, 2019
BEFORE THE ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE
IN SUPPORT OF
S.B. No. 6 AN ACT CONCERNING NET NEUTRALITY PRINCIPLES AND INTERNET PRIVACY
AND IN OPPOSITION TO
S.B. No. 847 AN ACT CONCERNING THE REGULATION OF VOICE SERVICE PROVIDERS

Senator Needleman, Representative and other members of the Energy and Technology Committee my name is Tom Swan and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Citizen Action Group. On behalf of our thousands of members statewide I want to thank you for raising S.B. No. 6 AN ACT CONCERNING NET NEUTRALITY PRINCIPLES AND INTERNET PRIVACY. We believe that the free flow of ideas is essential in a functioning democracy and that Net Neutrality is an essential consumer protection as technology continues to evolve and we become ever more dependent on access to information.

We understand the decision at the federal level by the Trump FCC was driven by industry lobbyists and that lobbyists attempt to use that decision to raise questions pertaining to the legality of a state based Net Neutrality policy. We believe a state-based policy would withstand any legal challenge, but if the Committee has concerns about court challenges you could tie Net Neutrality policies to companies doing business with the state as was proposed in a bill before the Government Administration and Election Committee last year.

In many ways enacting Net Neutrality at a state level would be a boon for Connecticut's economy. It would be appealing to younger people, attract start-up companies and it compliments Governor Lamont's proposal to make Connecticut a leader in 5 G technology.

CCAG continues to oppose the deregulation of land line service as proposed in S.B. No. 847 AN ACT CONCERNING THE REGULATION OF VOICE SERVICE PROVIDERS. The legacy phone companies continue to benefit from their status and Frontier bought its way into the state understanding our regulatory framework. This type of bill has been pushed by industry and rightwing groups like ALEC. There is no benefit for consumers from this bill, which would disproportionately impact older residents of CT.

We recognize that Frontier is in a precarious financial situation and that some may use this as a rationale for advancing this legislation. Connecticut consumers and laws protecting consumers did not create their problems. Over extending themselves while acquiring companies like they did in Connecticut is what caused their problems. We should not lose our protections because of bad decisions by executives.

Finally, I noticed Frontier is arguing that deregulation would be good for consumers. When I hear that I yell grab your wallet. A regulated monopoly arguing for competition to protect consumers is an asinine argument to make. It was proven to be a lie when Northeast Utilities argued it on the electric front and it will be here if you allow this bill to go forward.

Thank you very muc.