

KEVIN LEMBO
STATE COMPTROLLER



MARTHA CARLSON
DEPUTY COMPTROLLER



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE *of the* STATE COMPTROLLER
165 Capitol Ave.
Hartford, CT 06106

Written Testimony
Comptroller Kevin Lembo March 9, 2021

Senate Bill 4: An Act Concerning Data Privacy, Net Neutrality, Cyber Security and Fairness in Data Usage in the New Age of a Digital Workforce.

Good morning Senator Needleman, Representative Arconti, Senator Formica, Representative Ferraro and members of the Energy and Technology Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 4: An Act Concerning Data Privacy, Net Neutrality, Cyber Security and Fairness in Data Usage in the New Age of a Digital Workforce.

As you know, in 2017 the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) overturned protections for a free and open internet commonly known as net neutrality. This decision has yet to produce any of the promised windfalls of private sector telecommunications investment and threatens to hinder economic activity here in Connecticut by allowing telecom companies to slow connectivity, block content, or levy additional fees from businesses and consumers in our state.

Any effort to create an unlevel playing field that punishes some residents and small businesses while giving corporations built-in advantages must be opposed. SB 5 aims to provide the necessary combination of transparency, oversight and enforcement to protect consumers and guarantee an open internet.

Additionally, I hope this effort begins a broader conversation about guaranteeing broadband access as a public utility and regulating it accordingly. Our future economy depends on affordable and universal internet access and Connecticut government should be setting a national example by leading on the issue.

Net neutrality supports the fundamental principles shared by Connecticut and its citizens: inclusion, fairness and opportunity. A free and open internet is a goal consistent with the shared values of our state. I applaud the efforts of advocates and lawmakers to restore open internet protections, particularly Senator Duff. I remain ready to assist in these efforts in any way that may be helpful.

Other provisions included in SB 4 also have the potential to make broadband internet more accessible and a safer, more protected resource for Connecticut residents and I applaud the legislature for taking these up. I'd like to call attention to a study that would look at the impacts of municipalities consolidating resources to optimize fiber optic connections. Allowing this collaboration could provide important efficiencies for municipalities that would increase access and decrease financial burdens. I look forward to seeing the results of this study.

Thank you for your time and consideration.