STATEMENT OF THE NEW ENGLAND CABLE & TELECOMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATION, INC. IN OPPOSITION TO SB 628

Introduction


As the State of Connecticut considers SB 628 An Act Concerning The Development Of A High-Speed Broadband Infrastructure Plan, which would create a new, unnecessary government requirement on broadband, we think it is important to understand the capabilities of Connecticut’s existing networks and as well as the infrastructure plans of our members:

- Connecticut is one of the most connected states in the country.

- Connecticut residents and businesses have access to among the highest broadband speeds in the country.

- Beyond speed, our networks deliver products that support the businesses that drive economic development. We have the capacity to expand and enhance those products as new and different business needs emerge.

- Most consumers access the Internet over WiFi networks. We are focused on expanding the availability and speed of WiFi networks both inside and outside the home.

- In 2016, NECTA members began deploying DOCSIS 3.1, a system capable of delivering gigabit speeds to the residential market.
Goals

NECTA members are focusing on these goals:

1. Continue to innovate and invest in our state-of-the-art networks, so that all consumers benefit from the most reliable broadband infrastructure, capable of delivering the highest speeds.

2. Close the digital divide.

3. Remain competitive by providing products and services consumers demand.

Goal One - Innovation and Investment

NECTA members have collectively invested $2 billion over the past seven years developing state of the art networks in Connecticut. These networks are successfully meeting the needs of public and private sector consumers and they can be scaled to address future demand. Today, as a result of private investment and innovation, Connecticut has several privately operated gigabit networks, consisting of at least 8,000 miles of fiber and capable of providing speeds in excess of 1 gigabit. These networks are constantly growing both in terms of reach and capacity as our members continually invest in additional fiber and new technologies.

Some NECTA members have begun deploying what is known as DOCSIS 3.1 which is critical technology to provide even faster, more reliable data speeds and features. DOCSIS 3.1 is capable of delivering 1 to 10 gigabit speeds and has the potential to benefit millions of homes, as opposed to targeted areas or corridors.

Goal Two - Digital Divide

The cable telecommunications industry of course understands that broadband represents a significant economic development opportunity. Access to the Internet is integral to jobs, education and our general ability to obtain information. Despite this, not everyone who has access to broadband speed adopts the service. As an industry, we are partnered with federal, state and local officials to address the digital divide. Through various initiatives we are making important progress getting more low-income families online through robust and expanding low income broadband adoption programs.
Goal Three - Products and Services
NECTA members have a natural interest in providing Internet services that meet the needs and demand of Connecticut consumers. Our members have recognized that consumers demand mobility – they want to access the Internet where and when they want. Always ahead of the demand, our members are properly focused on expanding their already vast WiFi networks. WiFi is the primary way most consumers connect to the Internet. NECTA members have deployed over 200,000 WiFi hotspots throughout Connecticut allowing consumers to access the Internet easily. Further, Connecticut consumers have access to tens of millions of WiFi hotspots across the country.

New Broadband Technologies
Our membership has consistently increased speeds over the last decade, usually with little or no associated price increase. Currently, NECTA members offer residential subscribers a variety of speed tiers with the top speed levels ranging between 60 to 2 Gbps. We have already mentioned DOCSIS 3.1.

Other members are also considering new technologies.

For example, wireless companies around the world are racing to bring 5G gigabit wireless service to market. They too will be capable of providing gigabit service. Currently, all four major wireless carriers now offer unlimited data plans over 4G.

Many fixed wireless providers are exploring new technology to increase their speed. RedZone Wireless in Maine, Hammer Fiber in New Jersey, and Starry in Boston are examples of wireless solutions being deployed by private carriers in both rural and urban environments.

Based on the success of DISH Network’s Exede satellite broadband service, DISH plans to launch another satellite to increase the capacity of the service which DISH states will be able to provide 100+ Mbps of broadband to any home.

Frontier offers tiers over VDSL of up to 115 Mbps, which based on their FCC Form 477 filing from December 2015 appears to be available in much of their footprint. Frontier has also begun rolling out its own FTTH service to compete with cable and has deployed those services in communities like New Haven, North Haven, Hartford, West Hartford, Shelton, and other areas around the state.
The marketplace is clearly driving innovation, creating competition and satisfying consumers, without the need for a prescriptive government determined broadband plan.

**Conclusion**

The history of the U.S. broadband industry is one of competitors constantly challenging each other and spurring competitive responses. The marketplace is dynamic and it will continue to push phone companies, wireless providers, and cable companies to compete with continued intensity. Connecticut's twin advantages of having both advanced broadband infrastructure and a thriving competitive marketplace should carefully be considered before the state attempts to outline a plan that could limit the progress we are making.

For all the above reasons, NECTA respectfully requests that the Commerce Committee members oppose SB 628.

Respectfully submitted,

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