



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF CONNECTICUT.

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CGA Energy and Technology Committee Public Hearing – February 26, 2020

SUPPORT FOR

Raised Bill SB 176 - AAC Establishment of a Fee Paid by Multichannel Video Programming Distributors to Companies or Organizations Responsible for Community Access Programming.

**Submitted by Pua Ford, Media Issues Specialist
League of Women Voters of Connecticut**

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut appreciates the opportunity today to offer support for the above-named bill, based on the position adopted by our membership in May 2008 and updated at the 2019 League Convention:

The League of Women Voters believes that community access media — for public, educational, and governmental programming — must be adequately protected, promoted, and funded, regardless of the provider of TV/video services or the platform on which it is delivered to Connecticut residents.

The League has supported previous versions of this bill over the years, and we do so again today. Local community access media is still one of the best tools for our local Leagues to educate the public on issues we track, and is still one of the best means to get our local election debates and forums to the voters.

Extending PEG support funding to subscribers of all services is logical and fair

Raised Bill 176 seeks to address an ever-increasing problem with operational funding for community access channels—the decrease in cable subscribers. This committee version of the bill is thoughtful and detailed in the way it updates the foundational statute (CGS 16-331a) for community access programming. The added language on lines 170-174 makes sure that subscribers are not “double-billed,” but that the subscriber base is extended.

Now that so many of the nonprofit Community Access Providers and town-specific Governmental and Educational channels are making their programming available on the internet, it is only fair and logical that those who watch will also make the same contribution of **less than a dollar a month.**

We thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. I attach additional information but welcome any questions that committee members may have.

ADDENDUM

How many Community Access Providers are there?

The most recent list on the PURA website (“Public Access Channels and Studios” dated 11/29/17) lists 34 organizations are officially designated CAPs. Of these, we know that 13 are owned by cable companies and 21 are now run by independent nonprofit organizations. In addition, there are about 80 town-specific governmental and educational access channels provided by the cable companies; most of these operate without financial support from their CAP.

Nonprofit CAPs operate in: Stratford (public studio for Bridgeport, Fairfield, Milford, Orange, Woodbridge), New Haven (also for West Haven, Hamden), East Haven, Branford, North Branford, Wallingford, Guilford, Madison, Westbrook (also for Clinton, Killingsworth, Durham, Haddam, Chester, Deep River, Essex, Old Saybrook), Groton (also for Ledyard, Stonington, North Stonington, Voluntown), Bolton (also for Vernon, Ellington, Tolland, Andover, Hebron, Marlborough), Hartford, West Hartford, Simsbury, Bloomfield, Windsor, East Hartford, Farmington (also for New Britain, Berlin, Plainfield, Bristol, Burlington, Avon, Canton), Waterbury (also for Plymouth, Wolcott, Prospect, Middlebury), Sharon (also for Salisbury, Canaan, North Canaan, Norfolk).

There are also many non-CAP community access organization, mostly town-specific that do not receive per subscriber fees but receive support from their towns or schools.

How do we know that community access is valued in Connecticut?

Unlike some other states, Connecticut makes provision of community access mandatory (CGS 16-331(b)). If there is no independent, nonprofit community organization that provides facilities, equipment, technical and managerial support for residents to produce programs, then the MVPD must provide it.

How much do the CAPs receive from per subscriber fees?

Per subscriber fees, mostly from 2018 Annual Reports			
	Cable	Frontier	total
Wallingford - WPAA	\$ 69,896.74	\$ 17,763.22	\$ 87,659.96
Branford	\$ 63,865.84	\$ 15,008.58	\$ 78,874.42
North Haven	\$ 56,101.18	\$ 18,992.21	\$ 75,093.39
Totoket - North Branford			\$ 57,741.00
Guilford	\$ 51,337.66	\$ 11,220.43	\$ 62,558.09
Madison (2017 "Grants")			\$ 63,854.01
East Haven (2015 "grants")	\$ 68,576.80	\$ 20,101.77	\$ 88,678.57
West Hartford			\$ 155,037.00
Simsbury	\$ 55,556.00	\$ 8,034.00	\$ 63,590.00
Windsor Community TV - Total	\$ 58,858.36	\$ 11,643.71	\$ 70,502.07
Hartford HPATV	\$ 122,200.00	\$ 34,371.00	\$ 156,571.00
Bloomfield (2017, also got \$35,417.96 fr donors)	\$ 49,790.22	\$ 7,416.23	\$ 57,206.45
East Hartford			\$ 99,279.00
Nutmeg	\$ 470,947.00	\$ 79,935.00	\$ 550,882.00
Southeastern (Public Service Revenue)			\$ 189,703.00
Citizens - New Haven	\$ 456,881.39	\$106,875.51	\$ 563,756.90
Valley Shore			\$ 176,029.00
Waterbury - Skye	\$ 295,653.20	\$ 59,853.00	\$ 355,506.20
Sound View (from 990 for 2018)			\$ 616,638.00
(portion of per sub to Area 2 CAC)	\$ 100,000.00	\$ -	\$ 100,000.00
TriState Communications (2013 pub svc revenue?)			\$ 116,117.00
Community Voice Channel	\$ 241,423.45	\$ 24,729.08	\$ 266,152.53

It is worth noting that for several years in affidavits filed with PURA, Comcast states that in their company-owned community access facilities, expenses are higher than what they receive in per subscriber fees.

How much do cable subscribers pay for community access support now?

CATV Franchise Area	2017 Amount	2017 CPI	2018 Amount
Cablevision of Connecticut d/b/a Altice USA*	\$4.74	1.70%	\$4.82
Cablevision of Litchfield d/b/a Altice USA	\$10.39	See Section IIC	\$9.74
Cablevision of Southern Connecticut d/b/a Altice USA	\$7.64	1.70%	\$7.77
Charter Northeastern	\$7.96	1.70%	\$8.10
Charter Western	\$7.96	1.70%	\$8.10
Comcast/Branford	\$8.17	1.70%	\$8.31
Comcast/Clinton	\$7.51	1.70%	\$7.64
Comcast/Danbury	\$7.80	1.70%	\$7.94
Comcast/Groton	\$7.71	1.70%	\$7.84
Comcast/Hartford	\$8.23	1.70%	\$8.37
Comcast/Lakeville	\$8.58	1.70%	\$8.72
Comcast/Lyme	\$8.90	1.70%	\$9.05
Comcast/Middletown	\$7.77	1.70%	\$7.90
Comcast/New Haven	\$9.55	1.70%	\$9.71
Comcast/Meriden	\$10.86	1.70%	\$11.04

PURA determines the annual amount in each area of the state. Subscribers pay less than a dollar per month, less than the fee for “Broadcast TV” or “Regional Sports.”



Per subscriber fees are not the only revenue available

But they are the most reliable source for their operating budgets. Organizations also participate in fundraising (e.g., West Hartford Interactive’s *Take Five* gala on Friday, March 20). But if the operating budget has shrunk, and staff have to be let go, there might not be anyone to help stage a fundraising event.

CAPs also apply for grants (e.g., Hartford Foundation for Public Giving). Some CAPs also receive sponsorships from their local businesses (e.g., to help pay for a video production van in exchange for the company logo on the van’s side). Some have dues-paying members from the local residents.

But none of these efforts can give the consistent operational funding that per subscriber fees have provided in the past.

What has cord-cutting done to the nonprofit CAPs?

Regional CAPs	2013 PEG support	2018 PEG support	Change in \$ amount	% Change
Sound View	\$ 687,190.00	\$ 616,648.00	\$ (70,542.00)	-10.27%
Nutmeg	\$ 576,720.00	\$ 550,882.00	\$ (25,838.00)	-4.48%
Community Voice	\$ 278,533.00	\$ 266,152.53	\$ (12,380.47)	-4.44%
Town-specific CAPs	2013 PEG support	2018 PEG support	\$ Change	% Change
Hartford Public	\$ 216,246.00	\$ 145,608.00	\$ (70,638.00)	-32.67%
Wallingford Public	\$ 89,640.57	\$ 87,659.96	\$ (1,980.61)	-2.21%
Totoket	\$ 57,327.00	\$ 57,741.00	\$ 414.00	0.72%