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Testimony on HB 2449 – Creating a Statewide Broadband Franchise

February 7, 2018

Energy, Utilities and Telecommunications Committee

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

HB 2449 is the simplest bill that I will bring to you. Several years ago, video service providers successfully sought to establish a statewide franchise capability because every municipality had different franchise application processes, potentially different franchise fee amounts, and different application processing fees and requirements. A strong majority of legislators agreed that consumers would benefit from a uniform and expedited approval process, while municipalities continued to receive reasonable compensation for providing access to municipal rights-of-way.

HB 2449 expands the definition of competitive video service provider from simply providing video programming to include in the definition: “the packet delivery system for video service.” Videos are delivered using the packet system, so are broadband, voice, and data.

This issue was brought to my attention by a small cable provider who found it difficult with his small staff and resources to meet the different requirements and fees from the many municipalities he was seeking to serve. He did not object to reasonable requirements, but wanted uniformity. Uniformity is something that we frequently hear as being important to businesses.

Passage of HB 2449 simply means that a statewide franchise for video services includes broadband. It is designed to provide customers access to broadband more efficiently and more cost-effectively. It does not mandate that broadband providers avail themselves of a statewide franchise, it is entirely voluntary and providers could continue to negotiate on a municipality by municipality basis.

Mr. Chairman, Committee Members, I will respond to questions at the appropriate time.