

Dear {fill in the official's name here},

I am writing in opposition to the Verizon bill, sponsored by Senator Steven Panagiotakis and Representatives James Vallee and Harold Naughton, Jr. I am a member of Cambridge Community Television, and am concerned about how the bill might affect support for Public, Educational, and Governmental Access funding and channels.

I am not opposed to competition and would welcome having a choice of cable providers in my community. My objection to this bill is that the current system of local franchising, in place in the Commonwealth for over 30 years, has ensured local control over the public rights of way, as well as cable systems that are responsive to the particular needs and interests of each municipality. Competition is permitted and significant profit margins for cable companies have been realized. Under the existing law, all cable licenses are non-exclusive and Verizon has already successfully negotiated and signed over 40 franchises in the Commonwealth through the existing procedures. If Verizon would substantially match the contractual obligations of incumbent cable providers, most communities would gladly expedite the grant of a competitive license. In many cases, it has been Verizon that has been unable to build out cable systems to keep pace with towns and cities wanting to accelerate the licensing process.

Some of my specific objections to the proposed bill:

Verizon's proposed state licensing bill is harmful to cities and towns in many ways. The proposed bill:

- requires license review by the Commonwealth to be completed in only FIFTEEN DAYS, without any review of the applicant's financial or technical qualifications to build or operate a cable system
- provides no mechanism for the negotiation of better terms than what is included in the initial application, nor for community-specific benefits
- provides no mechanism for negotiating service area, allowing Verizon to pick and choose which neighborhoods to serve
- grants the ability for the licensee to simply notify the Commonwealth when it wishes to increase its service area, without submitting an application
- requires only a limited number of access channels and provides for the removal of channels based on strict limitations on repeat programming
- does not guarantee PEG channel interconnection between the incumbent and the new licenses
- does not require emergency override capability for the municipality
- does not obligate the new licensee to meaningfully match current obligations, particularly related to support for PEG access, in existing licenses, thereby threatening those licenses

I urge you to do whatever you can to defeat this bill.

Sincerely,