

CTV7 AUGUSTA

IN SUPPORT OF LD1967 AN ACT TO SUPPORT
MUNICIPAL FRANCHISE AGREEMENTS COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY, UTILITIES AND TECHNOLOGY



October 25, 2023

Senator Lawrence, Representative Ziegler and members of the Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology.

I am Andrea Dubois the operations manager of CTV7 Augusta I am pleased to support LD 1967 An Act to Support Municipal Franchise Agreements.

I am also part of the organization called the Maine Community Media Association (MCMA) we are a non-profit networking organization for the 47 Community Television stations which serve not only here in our State's Capital City, Augusta, but approximately 300,000 homes in Maine via traditional cable tv, as well as streaming programming online live and making it available on demand. This "programming" includes local School Board meetings, Planning Board meetings, City Council Meetings, High School Basketball games, holiday parades, the longest running high school talent show, highlights of community members, and the list goes on. Our primary mission is to facilitate open government through televising and streaming municipal meetings and to help build the culture of the community with local programming about the people and events around us. Our community stations have observed they are a vital cog in the governmental, educational, and community culture all along. No one else provides these kinds of services except for these stations.

What does all the above really mean? It means I have had a front seat to watching our City Government and having the honor of providing Government transparency to the community via cable or internet. In the time of crisis, our local station provided critical coverage by harnessing the power of Zoom technology into our local broadcasts during the Covid-19 pandemic when no one could attend in person. Our connection to the community kept our citizens informed during an unprecedented time.

In addition to government programming, we run a 24hr community bulletin board, providing valuable information for our community. We have done programs with our local police and fire departments, featured community leaders, our local library and school programs. For the past 13 years we have filmed Maine's longest running high school talent show - Chizzle Whizzel. For over 132 this show has entertained family & friends and CTV7 has been there to bring it to our community.

I have had the opportunity to cover Cony Basketball and watch budding freshman basketball stars rise to their senior year making 1,000 baskets and awarded college scholarships. We have filmed Fourth of July parades, Christmas tree lightings and shared the history of Old Fort Western.

Community programming is key and CTV7 can reach homes where people cannot leave to go to city & schoolboard meetings, holiday & special events due to life circumstances.

We need all the support we can get to pass this bi-partisan bill, "Act to Support Municipal Franchise Agreements." Below are some bullet points of what the passing of this bill will do.

1. Maintains local control with municipalities retaining their decision to charge franchise fees but made them payable to the municipality quarterly, not annually.
2. Reduces the potential cost of PUC oversight to half the original estimate, by removing subscriber complaints from PUC oversight and affirming that the AG (and the Public Advocate if they agree) would handle those as they have in the past, leaving only occasional municipal franchise non-compliance issues to be resolved by the PUC through an arbitration process.
3. Requires all Video Service providers to carry public, educational and governmental access channels in **HD** if requested, on the provider's basic cable or video service offerings, tiers, or apps.
4. Eliminates mandatory preconditions for implementing the 15 residences per linear strand mile and defines how the strand mile is measured.
5. Clarifies the responsibility of a video service provider with respect to the costs associated with public, educational and governmental facility transmission equipment.
6. Amends those laws to specify the oversight responsibilities using The Cable Act and not Utility regulations as described by those laws relative to video service providers, which includes cable system operators.

In serving the City of Augusta through the CTV7 station, I have been moved by the community and all who invest their lives here. Public Access, Education & Government stations, are not just a low-quality joke. Our Community, Government, and educational stations are an essential part of our communities, and we need to protect them. To close I would like you to ponder what would happen if we didn't have these stations? Who stands in the gap?

Andrea Dubois

Operations Manager

CTV7 Augusta

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