

Michael Bradley
Woodbury, MN
LD 1967

Testimony of Michael R. Bradley, Partner, Bradley Werner, LLC
In Support of LD 1967, An Act To Support Municipal Franchise Agreements
Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology
October 16, 2023

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

My name is Michael R. Bradley. I am a partner of the law firm Bradley Werner, LLC, with offices located in the Minneapolis area and Chicago area. Our law firm represents towns and local governments across the country on cable franchising, broadband, telecommunications, and wireless issues. I have had the privilege of representing towns in the Greater Portland area on cable franchising.

I am pleased to support LD 1967, An Act To Support Municipal Franchise Agreements.

I would like to share frustrations experienced by many towns in Maine when it comes to the provision of public, educational, and governmental (PEG) access channels. These PEG access channels provide video programming of local interest to the consumers and citizens of their respective towns, such as town board meetings and local events. Most towns in Maine are producing their PEG channels in high definition today. Indeed, it is difficult to purchase any video production equipment that is not high definition or greater. However, at least one cable system operator in Maine has claimed their equipment is incapable of receiving PEG access channel signals in HD. As a result, if a town transmitted its PEG access channel signals in HD to the cable system operator, the channel would go dark because the cable operator has not purchased the equipment to receive the HD signal. As a result, consumers and residents would see only a blank screen rather than a HD video signal. Towns in Maine are therefore forced to transmit inferior video signals to the cable operator. This results in consumers and residents in the State of Maine receiving substandard PEG channels and diminishes the quality of their viewing experiences.

Another critical issue is the buildout of cable and broadband systems serving towns in Maine. Recent legislation required cable operators to comply with new line extension requirements. The intent of the legislature, I believe, was to ensure that most residents in Maine would have access to broadband and cable services provided over a cable system. Unfortunately, these new standards arguably do not have to be complied with until the cable operator renews a cable franchise. The result is that cable operators have a disincentive to renew cable franchises and comply with this new law.

Thank you for your work on LD 1967 and protecting consumers in Maine. This bill will greatly benefit Maine residents.