

My name is Patrick Bonsant and I am the director of **Saco River Community Media**, a 6-town community television/media center located in Hollis, Maine.

Community television/media is a valuable service because it supports and upholds Maine's time-honored local town hall meeting tradition. For nearly 25 years, SRC-Media has been providing the citizens of Buxton, Hollis, Limerick, Limington, Standish and Waterboro with reliable access to municipal and school board meetings. We also offer, no-cost media production training that leads to a wide array of substantive local and regional programming not found anywhere else on television or online.

In many ways, grass roots media centers like ours allow democracy to thrive and flourish. Saco River Community Media functions as a hyper local source of news and information. "PEG" (public, education, government media) offers local people in our service area an open, inclusive 1st Amendment forum on cable and online.

Recent examples of community programs produced by Saco River Community Media include, first and foremost, a wide array of town meetings. We also empower local people with studio and on-location production training.

Recent examples of our unique form of citizen journalism include studio recordings of a statewide veteran's support group, the director of Waterboro's adult education center, the superintendent of MSAD 6, school board candidates and the director of the Job Corps program, among others.

We're also proud to support and promote local historical societies, gardening enthusiasts, local parades and community fundraisers, church suppers, on-location music programs, farmers, and local business owners, to name just a few.

Community media is often called hyper-local because our channels are the only place featuring local faces and voices. In a sense, we are neighborhood media. We do not offer sensational, high-tech programming - just honest, straightforward town information.

Our vital information dissemination services are aimed at a rural audience hungry for relevant news and timely information. The demise of the print media has added a strong sense of urgency to our mission.

Spectrum/Charter has some good employees, but they have consistently shown no interest in fostering community in the towns that support and enrich them. Local issues and concerns mean little or nothing to the corporation. We've had to take Charter to court to maintain a visible local presence on the cable dial when the company unilaterally slammed us into stratospheric channel 1301 oblivion after acquiring Time-Warner in 2016.

We prevailed in that fight but are continuing to battle against policies designed to diminish and downgrade our efforts to support and build community in the towns we serve.

We are not opposed to business; we just need new entrants in the video service field pay a nominal support fee so municipal officials can connect with their constituency reliably, consistently and affordably.

Your support of LD 1967 will help establish sensible, consumer friendly regulatory guidelines for video service providers looking to offer services in Maine.

The legislation we are proposing will help ensure local information, human interest stories and vital town hall information continues to be supported and upheld on cable and online.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

With every good wish,

Patrick Bonsant
Executive Director, Saco River Community Media