

Senator Jane Kitchel

Cc: Senate Appropriations Committee

Date: April 17, 2023

RE: Wireless cell service for unserved & underserved communities

We appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony. Mac Mountain at its core was founded to provide a cellular solution to unserved and underserved areas in Vermont, which were otherwise uneconomical or unfeasible to cover. At its best, the ubiquitous lack of cellular coverage in our state is an inconvenience; however, too often it is tragic. We believe the economic growth of our state, the health and well-being of our citizens, as well as the appeal to those who live, work, and play here in Vermont, all revolve around providing equal access to comprehensive cellular coverage.

We have all heard complaints and stories about community acceptance, the siting of larger towers, and general lack of interest by wireless carriers to fill the gaps that are less populated areas. The Mac Mountain solution addresses community outreach/acceptance utilizing smaller pole installations that can be placed in units <50 feet or co-located with existing infrastructure such as streetlights, telephone poles, or rooftops. We have built an economic model that utilizes carrier neutral radio equipment to co-host signals from multiple carriers as well as emergency services. Owning this equipment allows the State of Vermont, in partnership with Mac Mountain, to operate as the lessor to carriers on our network, ultimately providing a sustainable revenue source for operation, while also reducing the cost to deliver coverage.

The State of Vermont has already laid the groundwork to take the next steps in advancing connectivity. The robust power networks and the thoughtful plan to provide fiber connection to homes make the building of a comprehensive cellular network possible. The impressive work of the CUDs makes them an ideal collaborator to provide fiber backhaul for such a network. The efforts of DPS to thoroughly map the Vermont roadways for coverage have highlighted the gaps in service and identified priority locations for radio sightings.

However, Vermont would enter into an RFP process which will likely result in multiple proposals which any company or carrier could submit. Our message has been clear, keep the language in an RFP flexible so that creative thinkers can bring Vermont the right solution. Commissioner Tierney is correct; by making wireless service a priority, Vermont can and should get started in taking steps to deploy a solution. The Governor's budget requested \$10 million to do just that. We can't let the past keep us from the future.

As a Middlebury College graduate, I came to Vermont and fell in love with its beauty but without cell service many sectors will continue to have difficulties working or playing in Vermont.

Please see the attached concept paper which will provide a much better understanding of our concept. We would be happy to meet with individual Senators and the Committee, please don't hesitate to contact me for any questions you may have.

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