

Testimony Delivered to the Appropriations Committee on August 27, 2020 Public Comment on Governor's FY21 Budget.

From: Tammie Reilly, Executive Director, GNAT-TV & President, Vermont Access Network

Thank you for your hard work and support of community media and PEG access. The PEG Study is now included in the Governor's FY21 Budget request and we wanted to bring this to your attention with the hope that you would reiterate your support when you recommend the FY21 Budget expenditures.

Request: On behalf of Vermont's 25 local community media centers and the communities we serve, we seek your committee vote for the one time request for \$100,000 to fund a Public, Educational and Government (PEG) Access Financing Study that now appears in the Governor's version of the FY21 budget.

Recap: Passed in June of this Legislative session, the PEG Access Study is designed to identify revenue options meant to secure the future of Public, Educational and Government (PEG) Access Television specified in H. 966 (Section 19).

Why wasn't this study funded with COVID Relief Funds? Upon review, the Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD), responsible for the implementation of the PEG Study, determined that COVID Funds were not an appropriate revenue source. At ACCD's request, the Governor included the PEG Study in the FY21 Budget proposal.

Purpose of the Study: The PEG Study seeks to hire legal and financial analyst(s) to:

- Assess communications providers' use of public rights-of-way in order to determine whether and to what extent communications services may be subject to any fee or right-of-way assessment, given local, state and federal laws, statutes and ordinances.
- Survey examples from other jurisdictions/cities and states, (e.g., ROW fees or entertainment taxes).
- Prepare Financial models and policy recommendations for revenue projections for the generation of such fees or right-of-way assessments to support 25 community media centers across Vermont.
- Submit a report on or before December 2020, which may include draft legislation implementing a proposal.

Thank you for your consideration. We are available to provide additional testimony, if requested.