

VERMONT ACCESS NETWORK

31 August 2020

MEMO TO: Rep. Kitty Toll & Members of the Vermont House Appropriations Committee

FROM: Lauren-Glenn Davitian, CCTV Center for Media & Democracy & Vermont Access Network (VAN)

RE: Governors FY21 Recommendation to Support Study on Alternative Funding Options for Public, Educational and Government Access (PEG)

Our sincere thanks for including the PEG Study on Alternative Funding options into H. 966 (Section 19). The Agency for Commerce and Community Development has determined that this study is not eligible for federal COVID health emergency funding and you will now find it included in the Governor's proposed FY21 Budget.

Request: On behalf of Vermont's 25 local community media centers and the communities we serve, we seek your committee support for the one time request for \$100,000 to fund a Public, Educational and Government (PEG) Access Financing Study in the FY21 Budget. PEG Access Study is designed to hire legal and financial analysts(s) to identify revenue options meant to secure the future of Public, Educational and Government (PEG) Access Television in light of the decline of cable franchise fees.

The central purpose of this PEG Study is to: Assess communications providers' use of public rights-of-way in order to determine whether and to what extent communications services may generate fees or right-of-way assessments that do not come into conflict with federal law. This assessment would include examples from other jurisdictions/ cities and states, (e.g., Right of Way fees or entertainment taxes) to determine if there are policy examples that may be utilized by the Vermont legislature. Ideally, the result will be financial models and policy recommendations for revenue projections for the generation of such fees or right-of-way assessments.

A secondary purpose of this study is to: Conduct a business assessment of PEG access management organizations (AMOs) to determine if there are ways we can operate more efficiently and effectively.

Thank you for your consideration. We are available to provide additional testimony upon request.