

Testimony: House Committee on Government Operations, May 14th

My name is Lea Kilvadyova and I work as Regional Planner at Lamoille County Planning Commission (LCPC) that serves 10 towns and 5 incorporated villages in Lamoille County. I have been involved with broadband planning on municipal and regional levels for about dozen years (on and off), and the momentum for broadband that exists throughout the state today is amazing.

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to testify on the proposed legislation for an alternative way to form a Communications Union District. If passed, the proposed legislation will help Lamoille County municipalities in pursuing the creation of a CUD. Additionally, I have confirmed with executive directors of Addison and Rutland Regional Planning Commissions that their member municipalities could similarly benefit.

Following the enactment of Act 79, LCPC has been working with Lamoille County towns to understand the opportunities the legislation provides, educate ourselves on the status of connectivity in our region, study examples of successful broadband deployment efforts in VT and NH, and hold presentations and conduct broadband surveys at the 2020 Town Meeting. This community engagement work has prepared us well for applying for a Broadband Innovation Grant, which we were just awarded, and it prepared us very well for approaching our Selectboards with a request to create a governing entity to coordinate broadband deployment in our region.

As holding a Special Town Meeting is not an option at this time, and Selectboards will likely be hesitant to organize a public vote via Australian ballot in order not to expose poll workers and the general public to coronavirus, the proposed legislation is deemed by the LCPC and our member municipalities as the best way to support us in moving forward with the CUD.

Our municipalities wish to have an active role to play in broadband deployment. At our most recent meeting of the Lamoille Broadband Working Group held last night, the desire to form a CUD was reaffirmed by the group's representatives from six Lamoille towns. As an example, below is an email from a member of our broadband working group from Waterville attesting to Waterville's readiness to form a CUD. Thank you for your work on this legislative proposal.

From: Jeff Tilton

Sent: Wednesday, May 13, 2020 6:57 PM

Hi Lea- Thanks for hosting tonight. I think the takeaway I got was that there IS community interest in forming a Lamoille area CUD, but it is clear that it is going to take some considerable effort to gain momentum towards doing so, especially in the current climate. I think I'm fairly versed in the basics of CUDs, and I have a good feel for the Waterville community interest. I know the select board would like to see this go through as well. To that end, if there's anything I can do to help in the meantime, please let me know.