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From: Christine Hallquist <christinehallquist@gmail.com>

Sent: Tuesday, April 13, 2021 9:12 AM

To: Ann Cummings <ACUMMINGS@leg.state.vt.us>; Mark MacDonald <MMacDonald@leg.state.vt.us>; Christopher Pearson <CPearson@leg.state.vt.us>; Randy Brock <RBrock@leg.state.vt.us>; Michael Sirotkin <msirotkin@leg.state.vt.us>; Christopher Bray <CBray@leg.state.vt.us>; Ruth Hardy <RHardy@leg.state.vt.us>

Cc: Faith Brown <FBrown@leg.state.vt.us>

Subject: [External] Support of the CUD's

[External]

Dear members of Senate Finance,

I am concerned about the latest tenor of presentations from the private sector suggesting that CUD's are not up to the task. Do not buy into this rhetoric. Excuse my bias, however one of humankind's greatest works was the electrification of rural America. That was carried out by volunteer Boards.

The Rural Electrification Administration provided specifications and guidance to these volunteers. Those volunteer boards consisted of a cross-section of highly skilled advisors along with other community activists. Their passion and commitment could never have been replicated by the private sector.

The creation of CUD's is a state level replication of the REA. It is an amazing solution and I am proud of those of you who helped develop this model.

I have worked as an executive in the private sector as well as in the public sector. I will tell you that the Vermont Electric Cooperative board was the most ethical and committed group of people I had ever met.

I did not think that model could be improved upon. However, as administrator of NEK Community Broadband and Lamolle FiberNet, I am happy to say that it has been improved upon.

At NEK Community Broadband, we have developed, with the assistance of National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative, a detailed model that considers every possible input to determine the financials of providing fiber to the home for every home and business in the Northeast Kingdom.

In order to pay off the debt required to do this, it would take 20 years. That is assuming we do not serve addresses below 1 per mile. This assumes a non-profit carries it out and includes meeting the lender's financial requirements. Any profit or margin that is needed in the private sector means that a lot of rural Vermonters will not be served.

You have a once in a century moment in front of you with the potential funds coming from the Federal government. Please do not squander it.

Please make sure that money goes to the CUD's. We will work closely with the private sector to hold them accountable. We will hold them accountable for designing for the future, reliability, resilience, access, and transparency.

I personally have been working on this important goal since 2003. I am very excited that the solution is within view. If you choose to continue to put faith in the private sector to solve this problem, I, and many others, will be highly disappointed. In fact, I will give up on this and shift my efforts to another important issue, Climate Change.

With that said, I also have been advocating that we need a fiber-based Smart Grid since 2010. It is going to be much harder to mitigate Climate Change if we do not have the fiber infrastructure. If you want to learn more about the connection between the Smart Grid and Climate change, please watch my documentary Denial. It is available for free at <https://youtu.be/dvBmjrW0-rI>
<<https://youtu.be/dvBmjrW0-rI>>

With warm regards, Christine