

VERMONT ACCESS NETWORK

6 April 2021

MEMO TO: Vermont House Government Operations Committee

FROM: Kevin Christopher, Executive Director of LCATV on behalf of Vermont Access Network (VAN)

RE: S. 106 - PILOT PROJECT TO LIVESTREAM LEGISLATIVE PROCEEDINGS

My name is Kevin Christopher and I am the Executive Director of Lake Champlain Access Television (LCATV), based in Colchester and serving that community, as well as Milton, Westford, Georgia, Faifac, South Hero, Grand Isle, and North Hero.

I am speaking today on behalf of Vermont Access Network, or VAN, which represents 24 Community Media Centers across the State. VAN members provide Public, Educational and Government (PEG) access channels and services to all corners of the state. We are considered an “essential service” by the Vermont Legislature and received support for our work through Act 137.

Our members have a particular expertise in live coverage of public meetings, including “in-person”, virtual, and hybrid formats. During the COVID health emergency, our members worked (and are working) with countless municipalities and school districts to bring gavel-to-gavel coverage of public meetings to our communities and help them to make the transition to hybrid meeting formats.

VAN's Advocacy Committee has reviewed S.106 with interest. We offer the following items for your review as you fashion the scope of a study or pilot project for the livestream of legislative proceedings.

Sec. 1. PILOT PROJECT TO LIVESTREAM LEGISLATIVE PROCEEDINGS The Office of Legislative Information Technology shall facilitate and coordinate a pilot project with a for-profit or nonprofit entity to assist and assess the effectiveness and cost of audio or audio and video livestreaming the legislative proceedings of the General Assembly. The pilot project shall include the livestream, by audio or audio and video means, of all public proceedings of standing

committees of both chambers and on the floors of the House of Representatives and the Senate during the 2022 legislative session.

- What is the goal of the legislation? Is the purpose to stream live video to the general public or to enable on-going post pandemic remote participation in committee meetings?
- What is a realistic scope for a “pilot”? What do you have in mind here?
- Do you mean to put the technical pilot ahead of a study? Ideally, a study would include technical, financial (capital/operating), and policy considerations.
- It would be prudent to include requirements for recording and archiving the video files (policies/practices).
- What staffing would be directed to oversee these operations?
- In addition to the technical requirements and cost estimates, what are the Government Operations considerations?
- How does this fit into on-going IT upgrades within the Statehouse?
- Does this fit into the larger discussion of re-activating a statewide public meeting network, a VIT 2.0?

We are happy to discuss S. 106 in more detail, along with our experience providing video coverage to the Legislature and, more recently, setting up cost effective hybrid meetings for local governments. VAN is also available to and interested in participating in a Study Committee, if one should be deemed appropriate to further this discussion.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to Kevin Christopher, Executive Director, LCATV at kevin@lcatv.org / 802-862-5724, if further testimony is required.