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October 18, 2022

The Sports Betting Study Committee  
Public Hearing Comments

My name is Lisa Byer, and I am the Executive Director of Catamount Access Television (CAT-TV) in Bennington, VT. We serve as the Public, Educational, Governmental (PEG) Access Center for the 5 towns in our area – Bennington, North Bennington, Woodford, Pownal and Shaftsbury. We promote access to multimedia services that foster free speech and public dialogue. We provide coverage of hyper-local content that encourages citizens to engage in local government, education, arts, and other areas of interest. We also offer equipment and training to citizens that enables them to create local content.

As a member of the Vermont Access Network (VAN), CAT-TV is collectively working with the other 24 Access Centers in the state to ensure that our work will continue despite the dropping cable revenues that fund us. The Vermont Legislature identified PEG access as an “essential service” during the Pandemic due to our continuing coverage of public health messages, on-going access to public meetings, and connecting communities. In recognition of those services, the Legislature provided financial support for our pandemic operations and funded a PEG Study to examine the future of PEG in our state.

The PEG Study was released in January 2021 and confirms the inevitable decline of cable revenue in Vermont and increasing costs necessary to meet the demand for public meeting coverage and community communications. The PEG Study recommended that the Legislature use its authority to restructure Vermont’s telecommunications taxes and take a new look at how public benefits such as PEG will be funded.

VAN continues to work towards that broader policy change while also resolving short-term funding issues. We requested gap funding and received \$300,000(FY22) and \$600,000(FY23) which has been equally distributed to the state’s PEG Access Centers. We anticipate requesting \$1 Million in the upcoming budget.

This all relates to the topic at hand for this public hearing. We understand that this committee is charged with considering sports betting. VAN would like to be on the record as stating that the revenue derived from sports betting could be used as a public benefit to support the essential services of PEG Access Centers throughout Vermont.

We appreciate the consideration and look forward to continuing the discussion on the importance of PEG access and our ongoing need for public funding.

Sincerely,  
Lisa Byer, Executive Director  
lisa@catamountaccess.com

**Catamount Access Television Corporation - CAT-TV**

625 Main Street - Bennington, Vermont 05201

802-442-8868 info@catamountaccess.com www.catamountaccess.com