

Ryan Clark
AT&T External Affairs Lead—Vermont
January 14, 2026

Chair Kathleen James
House Committee on Energy and Digital Infrastructure
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Vice Chair R. Scott Campbell
House Committee on Energy and Digital Infrastructure
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Chair James, Vice Chair Campbell, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to be here today in support of extending 30 V.S.A. § 248a. My name is Ryan Clark, I am the state external affairs lead for AT&T in Vermont. I'm testifying in support of House Bill 527.

AT&Ts ability to invest and expand coverage in the state of Vermont efficiently is a direct result of 248a which is an effective permitting process from both a municipality and company perspective. Since 2022, we have filed more than 166 petitions via section 248a to improve our network in the state with more than 75 certificates of public good received in 2025 alone. These certificates show our good faith effort to work with the PUC and municipalities to improve communications platforms for Vermonters. Simply put, the process works for all parties, and we have been able to invest heavily in our network because of the certainty and predictability 248a affords.

Without 248a, we would expect the process of permitting a cell tower to take at least double the amount of time as it does today. This would significantly reduce our ability to invest and improve wireless communications for the state of Vermont.

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AT&T is committed to providing Vermonters with a strong network that allows them to connect with their loved ones, do their work, learn, and stay safe. Between 2020 and 2024, we invested more than \$90 million in our network infrastructure.

We pride ourselves on working with municipalities and communities whether it is working to build a new cell tower, collocation, or supporting the next generation through digital divide grants. We are committed to building a strong relationship with our customers and the communities they live in, which is why we make it a priority to follow all proper notification procedures and attend meetings with towns and cities when required to explain our coverage needs and objectives while listening to their concerns. 248a gives “substantial deference” to a town’s recommendation based on a town ordinance, and if the town wants a public hearing, they can have one.

As a result of these meetings, AT&T makes changes to the originally proposed designs of our towers and equipment on a regular basis. We often suspend the 248a timeline voluntarily to perform additional balloon tests, conduct environmental studies, or to work out a more mutually acceptable solution with the town. We also work to co-locate on existing towers, which AT&T and other providers do whenever feasible.

AT&T is in a unique position to provide connectivity to our first responders via our public private partnership with the Federal Government to support the FirstNet network. In Vermont, we are connecting public safety agencies and organizations in more than 330 localities. Ensuring that we have an effective and reliable permitting process enables AT&T to provide coverage to our first responders to ensure they can communicate and assist our communities in times of need.

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From our experience, most municipalities prefer for the PUC to review telecommunications applications since 248a has been in place for well over a decade. The firm that manages our permitting is encouraged by municipal officials not to file for local permits and instead use 248a.

AT&T believes that connecting changes everything and we are working hard to build out our network for the betterment of Vermonters who need a robust communications platform for work, play, education, and public safety. It is critical for long-term planning that we have a predictable and repeatable permitting process. That is why we support H.527 extending the sunset on 30 V.S.A. § 248a, and we would encourage the committee to consider permanently extending the sunset which would allow for telecommunications providers to plan our investment strategies for years to come.

Sincerely,
Ryan Clark
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