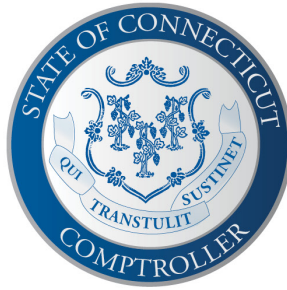


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Written Testimony
Comptroller Kevin Lembo February 27, 2020

Senate Bill 5: AN ACT CONCERNING INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS AND NET NEUTRALITY PRINCIPLES.

Good morning Senator Needleman, Representative Arconti, Senator Formica, Representative Ferraro and members of the Energy and Technology Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB-5: An Act Concerning Internet Service Providers and Net Neutrality Principles.

As you know, in 2017 the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) overturned protections for a free and open internet commonly known as net neutrality. This decision has yet to produce any of the promised windfalls of private sector telecommunications investment and threatens to hinder economic activity here in Connecticut by allowing telecom companies to slow connectivity, block content, or levy additional fees from businesses and consumers in our state.

Any effort to create an unlevel playing field that punishes some residents and small businesses while giving corporations built-in advantages must be opposed. SB 5 aims to provide the necessary combination of transparency, oversight and enforcement to protect consumers and guarantee an open internet. I would caution, however, that the oversight body, the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) has not always lived up to its responsibilities and must be closely monitored to ensure that it is enforcing penalties as necessary and is acting in the best interest of Connecticut residents, especially when under pressure from telecommunications companies to do the opposite.

Additionally, I hope this effort begins a broader conversation about guaranteeing broadband access as a public utility and regulating it accordingly. Our future economy depends on affordable and universal internet access and Connecticut government should be setting a national example by leading on the issue.

Net neutrality supports the fundamental principles shared by Connecticut and its citizens: inclusion, fairness and opportunity. A free and open internet is a goal consistent with the shared values of our state. I applaud the efforts of advocates and lawmakers to restore open internet protections, particularly Senator Duff. I remain ready to assist in these efforts in any way that may be helpful.

Thank you for your time and consideration.