



**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF THE NEW ENGLAND CONNECTIVITY &
TELECOMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATION IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL NO. 7871**

April 7, 2026

Dear Chair Solomon and distinguished Members of the House Corporations Committee,

On behalf of the New England Connectivity and Telecommunications Association (NECTA), I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 7871, relating to the relocation of utility services.

House Bill 7871 would amend the statutory provision governing reimbursement for utility facility relocations necessitated by federally funded highway projects. These forced relocations are not discretionary. They are required at the direction of the state and they impose significant, unavoidable costs on energy providers, telecommunications companies, and other entities with infrastructure in the public right-of-way.

For cable broadband providers, the impact is particularly acute. Unlike regulated utilities, broadband providers generally lack formal cost-recovery mechanisms that allow them to directly pass these expenses through in a transparent, structured way. Instead, unreimbursed relocation costs must be absorbed within capital budgets, diverting resources away from network investment, upgrades, and expansion.

The scale of these costs can be substantial. For large highway projects, relocation expenses can reach into the multi-million-dollar range, with costs increasing in direct proportion to project size and complexity. These are costs over which providers have no control, yet they function as a de facto tax on infrastructure investment—making it more expensive to deploy and maintain broadband networks in Rhode Island.

House Bill 7871's proposal to move to a 100 percent reimbursement model appropriately realigns this cost burden. By treating utility relocation as a component of the federally aided highway project, the bill ensures that the costs of public infrastructure improvements are borne by the project itself, rather than disproportionately imposed on cable broadband providers and other utility and telecommunications companies and, ultimately, their customers.

NECTA would like to thank Representative Finkelman and the other bill sponsors for their work on this important issue. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,



Timothy O. Wilkerson
President
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ABOUT NECTA

NECTA is a five-state regional trade association representing substantially all private cable broadband providers in Rhode Island, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont. In Rhode Island, NECTA represents Cox Communications. Cox produces an estimated \$850 million annually in economic activity in the state and employs over 600 Rhode Island residents generating over \$57 million in wage and salary payments.