



Senate Bill 2: An Act Concerning Artificial Intelligence
Senate Bill 3: An Act Concerning Consumer Protection

Joint Testimony of Mark Raymond and Doug Casey

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Good morning, Senator Maroney, Representative D’Agostino, Senator Cicarella, Representative Rutigliano and distinguished members of the General Law Committee. My name is Mark Raymond, and I serve as the State Chief Information Officer and Chair the Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology. I am joined by my colleague Doug Casey, Executive Director of the Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology. On behalf of DAS and the Commission, I have the following points to share concerning Senate Bill 2, An Act Concerning Artificial Intelligence, and Senate Bill 3, An Act Concerning Consumer Protection, by section.

SB2: An Act Concerning Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence is a dynamic and emerging field that brings both opportunity for improvement and need for caution. Aligning our efforts with emerging federal and global standards positions our state to protect resident privacy and benefit from emerging solutions. On behalf of DAS and the Commission, I look forward to working with the Committee on potential considerations given the executive branch AI Policy that was recently implemented.

Section 12 – The proposed provisions on lines 813 – 836 require that state agencies report on potential uses of AI technologies based on information collected from groups including employees, academia, collective bargaining units and other experts. Agencies would share that report with DAS, which approves or denies pilot projects and reports to the legislature a summary along with recommendations on items of legislative impact.

Current annual reports for technology efforts to the legislature are covered in current statute 4d-7. DAS would support aligning these new proposed requirements with existing technology reporting activities to streamline the collection, assessment and reporting.

Section 18 – To ensure alignment with existing efforts to promote broadband adoption through the promotion of affordable programs, we recommend linking proposed language under SB2 with the State Digital Equity Plan, developed by the Department of Administrative Services’ Commission for Educational Technology. That plan, with funding and support through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, provides specific goals and activities (see Goal 2: Ensure Public Awareness of Digital Equity Resources beginning on page 137 of the Plan, available at www.CT.gov/DigitalEquity). Specifically, we recommend updating section 18 with the additions noted in underlined text:

In consultation with the Department of Economic and Community Development, the Connecticut Academy of Science and Engineering, the Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology and broadband Internet access service providers, as defined in section 16-330a, design an outreach program for the purpose of promoting access to broadband Internet access service, as defined in said section and in alignment with the State Digital Equity Plan, in underserved communities in this state, and identify a nonprofit organization to implement and lead such outreach program under the supervision of the Chief Workforce Officer, the Department of Economic and Community Development, the Connecticut Academy of Science and Engineering, and the Commission for Educational Technology.

SB3: An Act Concerning Consumer Protection

Digital Equity (Section 1) – The Commission supports the steps described in the draft legislation to increase access to affordable broadband service, aligning with the State’s definition of “digital equity.”

Making Internet access ubiquitous and affordable is an essential condition to achieving and maintaining digital equity in Connecticut. The language in Senate Bill 3 calling for “public broadband investments” (line 54) aligns with the significant ongoing work of the Commission, including the establishment of the Connecticut Education Network (CEN), which provides secure, high-speed Internet connections to more than 600 educational, municipal, and government institutions statewide. Planned investments of federal relief dollars into the next phase of the “Community Wireless Program,” overseen by the Commission and administered by CEN, will greatly expand free and protected Internet access across the state to help close the digital divide.

The Commission also leads Connecticut’s Digital Equity Program, with funding through the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Over the past year, the Commission has engaged with more than 7,000 residents, engaged with agency and community partners, and conducted in-depth research to identify and address the barriers to technology access in Connecticut. The resulting Digital Equity Plan (see www.CT.gov/DigitalEquity) underscores the importance of universal and affordable Internet access to ensure the economic, workforce, education, health and wellness, and civic benefits defined in Connecticut State statute as well as in federal guidelines.

Based on this extensive research, several insights may help inform the trajectory of SB 3 and other, related broadband legislation:

- Connecticut is well connected but under-subscribed. Maps from the Office of Policy and Management (BroadbandMaps.CT.gov) illustrate the nearly ubiquitous availability of Internet access statewide. However, only about three-quarters of households subscribe to service. Survey and focus group data that the Commission has gathered point to affordability and awareness as two of the most significant barriers to broadband adoption. The steps in SB3 directly address these concerns.
- Broadband access is an essential component of digital equity. Having a fast, secure, and affordable connection is the first step in achieving digital equity. Given the state definition of “digital equity” above, which derives from federal standards, residents also need access to affordable devices, training, support, and digital services to ensure they can make full use of online tools to thrive in today’s world.
- The most marginalized are often the most at risk of digital disconnection. Results from the Commission’s research indicate that the ability of all residents to utilize technology effectively and safely remain low, with 64 percent meeting a basic digital literacy benchmark and 41 percent a digital security benchmark. These numbers dip much lower among those living at or below the poverty level, members of racial and ethnic minorities, veterans, people with a language barrier, and residents living with a disability. Removing cost and awareness barriers to broadband access — especially among these subgroups — remains essential in achieving digital equity.

Senate Bill 3 directly aligns with the six goals of the Connecticut Digital Equity Plan:

1. Promote Development of Digital Skills and Technical Support Programs
2. Increase Public Awareness of Digital Equity Resources
3. Ensure Residents Have Affordable Options for Getting Online that Meet Their Needs
4. Support Development of Accessible and Inclusive Digital Government at the State and Local Levels
5. Support High-Speed Broadband Infrastructure Buildout
6. Foster Ongoing Learning About Digital Equity Best Practices

Specifically, SB3 helps ensure the availability of a low-cost option (line 70), which supports the State Digital Equity goal 3, above. Allocating resources to support marketing and outreach, (SB3 lines 147 – 154) as well as the provision of a telephone hotline to assist residents with service enrollment (lines 124 – 128) align with State Digital Equity goals 2 and 6 as well.

We would ask the Committee members to consider changing the recommended “low cost” price point (line 70) from \$40 to \$30, to align with federal guidelines through the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) for qualifying households. All major Internet carriers in Connecticut currently offer programs at this price point, and we suggest revising the draft language to reflect that lower cost. With the likely end of the ACP benefit to more than 140,000 Connecticut households, defining “low cost” as even \$10-per-month cheaper will help ensure that families can maintain service.

Another recommendation is to revise the speed goals defined in the draft legislation. Lines 168 – 169 define target speeds of 25 megabits-per-second download and 3 megabits-per-second

uploads (lines 168 – 171). Such speeds are inadequate for the current and increasing demands of online work and learning, especially for an entire household. We encourage the minimum speed for affordable programs at 100 megabits-per-second download and 20 megabits-per-second uploads, which is how the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) defines a location as “served.” These faster target speeds also come closer to the State’s goal of universal access to speeds of 1 gigabit-per-second download and 100 megabits-per-second upload (CGS 16-330c).

Net Neutrality (Section 6) – The Commission supports the general principles of net neutrality and has expressed support of national net neutrality policy to the FCC. Policies that help prevent the types of filtering and throttling outlined in lines 427 – 447 of the draft legislation support the need for open, accessible Internet access for all residents.

Streaming Fees (Section 7) – The provisions described in lines 505 – 511 of the draft legislation help ensure that customers pay only for the digital services they wish and help to eliminate extraneous charges once residents have terminated service. The Commission supports these common-sense measures that protect consumers in our state, especially as the market of and demand for streaming services expands.

On behalf of DAS and the Commission, I thank you for raising these bills and appreciate your consideration of the points raised above.