



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michelle Hinchey

## Senator Michelle Hinchey's Bill to Expand Rural Broadband Service Receives Full Approval by State Legislature

MICHELLE HINCHEY June 10, 2021

| ISSUE: **BROADBAND ACCESS, RURAL BROADBAND**



**ALBANY, N.Y.** – This week, the New York State Senate passed a bill introduced by Senator Michelle Hinchey (SD-46) to make it easier and more affordable for broadband service providers to install internet service on utility poles, a measure that will help bridge the digital divide in rural and underserved areas of New York State. The bill ([S.7028](#)) will streamline the contract process for broadband expansion projects and ensure that installation costs are fairly allocated between broadband service providers (attachers) and utility pole owners.

Broadband providers are often hit with exorbitant and unforeseen costs when trying to install new internet service lines on utility poles, including requests to replace the entire pole, which can delay projects and result in significantly higher costs than budgeted. The proposed law would require utility pole owners to pay for a portion of pole improvements and prevent them from shifting the entirety of replacement costs onto broadband service providers. Utility pole replacement costs are built into ratepayer charges, and this bill further clarifies that companies already collecting for these purposes cannot put the cost burden solely on attachers and must divvy the costs in fair and equitable form.

The measure also addresses logistical challenges that small providers face when extending broadband infrastructure into un-served and underserved areas. Under the bill, all utility poles in a given city, town, or village will be placed under one contract, creating a more efficient system for broadband service providers to gain permission for their build-out. Regulations currently require providers to obtain contracts for each utility pole they intend to use.

"We have a responsibility to ensure that every household across New York State is connected to the internet, and this bill is one step we can take right now to break down unnecessary barriers and expand access in communities that need it the most," said **Senator Michelle Hinchey**. "I have constituents who take every Zoom meeting from their car in a library parking lot over 20 minutes away from home, and parents who have to choose between driving to a public hotspot so their kids can do their schoolwork or go to work themselves. These are impossible choices that we are forcing families to make. Access to the internet is no longer a luxury, it is a lifeline, and this bill will remove two common cost and efficiency barriers that are effectively leaving our rural communities behind. I am thrilled that we were able to secure the passage of this bill in both houses of the legislature before the end of session and urge the Governor to sign it into law."

**Jim Becker, President of Middleburgh Telephone Company (MIDTEL)**, said, “We appreciate and applaud Senator Hinchey’s work in helping address some of the 3rd party pole attachment challenges we are all experiencing in expanding our broadband networks to those in need. We look forward to continuing to work with the Senator and her office to help bring affordable and reliable broadband service to all households in New York.”

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### 2021-S7028

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- Introduced
  
- - In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
  
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
  
- - Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
  
- Delivered to Governor
  
- Signed By Governor

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Relates to requirements for certain contracts for attachments to utility poles and the use of utility ducts, trenches and conduits

May 25, 2021

Senate Floor Calendar

Sponsored by **Michelle Hinchey**

Do you support this bill?