

City of Palo Alto

Office of the Mayor and City Council

March 10, 2020

Honorable Anna Eshoo
202 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support for H.R. 5659, the Protecting Community Television Act


Dear Congresswoman Eshoo:

On behalf of the City of Palo Alto, I would like to thank you for introducing H.R. 5659, the Protecting Community Television Act. This bill would help local governments and their community media resources by revising the federal definition of cable franchise fees. Our Council agrees that community television is a critical social benefit, allowing for deeper public engagement in our political process. As such, we are happy to support your bill.

We were disappointed to learn last summer that the Federal Communications Commission voted to allow cable companies to designate a value for their in-kind contributions that benefited schools, public infrastructure, and public cable channels. Once so designated, cable companies then claimed these contributions as an expense that can be subtracted from the franchise fees they pay to local communities. Losing this money harms those who wish to learn and engage in the public process and places additional financial pressure on municipalities.

Your legislation would clarify that the cable franchise fees only include monetary assessments and not in-kind contributions. We support this notion and we look forward to the return of robust community programming.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

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Adrian Fine
Mayor
City of Palo Alto

Cc:
Palo Alto City Council
Ed Shikada, Palo Alto City Manager