LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF NEEDHAM

Testimony submitted to the
Joint Committee on Advanced Information Technology, the Internet and Cybersecurity
In support of H.74/S.34,
An Act to modernize funding for community media programming
By Carol Patey, President and Karen Price, Immediate Past President,
League of Women Voters of Needham
July 20, 2023

The League of Women Voters of Needham urges your support of H.74/S.34, which would provide sustainable funding for local community media programming such as our town's Needham Channel, a vital and established community asset. Originally only available to cable customers, the Needham Channel can now reach everyone, everywhere through recorded and live programs on its website.

Since 1988, the partnership of the League of Women Voters of Needham with the Needham Channel has ensured that Needham voters can see and hear candidates running for local, state and county offices. Even through the pandemic, the League and the Needham Channel were able to pivot to a remote format to live stream Candidates Night "live" on Zoom.

As an example, we sponsored a forum in 2022 for Norfolk County Commissioner candidates. With the Needham Channel's collaboration, this recorded forum garnered 1,348 views and was available to the entire county.

But candidate forums are just one example of our partnership. A quick search of the Needham Channel's program titles during its 30+ year history revealed hundreds of voter service and public interest programs that were in collaboration with the League of Women Voters of Needham. Without the Needham Channel, these programs would have reached a much smaller audience of residents, but with the Needham Channel they reached thousands.

Needham residents, the town, and the Needham League rely heavily on the Needham Channel to stay informed about and to participate in local government. As Needham print newspapers declined and eventually disappeared, the Needham Channel stepped up with new programming, producing the "Needham Local," a new online local news source.

A healthy democracy relies on an informed citizenry. In this era of dwindling reputable news sources and increasing news sources of questionable quality, community media programming provides a critical source of quality programming for a wide range of informational programming.

We urge you to report H.74/S.34 favorably out of committee to ensure adequate funding for the future of community programming like that the Needham Channel provides for Needham.

We thank you for your consideration.