

City Council

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City of Sebastopol

April 7, 2021

The Honorable Ben Hueso
Chair, Senate Energy, Utilities, and Communications Committee
State Capitol Building, Room 4035
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 556 (Dodd) Street Light Poles, Traffic Signal Poles, Utility Poles, and Support Structures: Attachments.
Notice of OPPOSITION (As Amended 03/16/21)

Dear Senator Hueso:

The City of Sebastopol must respectfully oppose SB 556 (Dodd), related to wireless broadband infrastructure deployment.

SB 556 directly conflicts with the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) adopted regulations on wireless services deployment, which cities and counties across the nation are actively implementing. This measure requires local governments to make space available to telecommunications providers without recognizing local authority to manage the public right-of-way preserved in federal law. FCC regulations explicitly enable local governments to ensure that such installations meet appearance and design standards, maintain traffic safety, protect historical resources' integrity, and safeguard citizens' quality of life. To protect the public's investment, the control of the public rights-of-way must remain local.

Additionally, SB 556 creates ambiguity in the fees local governments can charge for access to their infrastructure. Federal law explicitly outlines conditions for valid fees, limiting fees to a "reasonable approximation of the local government's actual and direct costs," including costs to maintain a structure within the right-of-way, process an application or permit, and review a siting application. SB 556, on the other hand, chooses not to incorporate these federal standards, further restricting fees to "actual cost" and "reasonable actual cost." If the goal of SB 556 is to implement the existing FCC orders into state law, there should be no added ambiguity created by changes from what was already decided at the federal level.

SB 556 is an attempt by the telecommunications industry to undermine local authority while making no meaningful progress towards closing the digital divide in California's unserved and underserved communities. As previously mentioned, cities and counties across the nation are implementing the FCC's orders. If California is to close the digital divide, legislative efforts should focus on encouraging and incentivizing telecommunications companies to service areas that for too long have not had access to reliable and affordable internet.

While the City of Sebastopol stands ready to work with the Legislature to further the state's broadband goals, these efforts do not inherently conflict with the appropriate local authority to manage the right-of-way and comply with existing FCC decisions. For these reasons, the City of Sebastopol opposes SB 556 (Dodd).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. McGuire', written in a cursive style.

Mayor
City of Sebastopol

cc: The Honorable Bill Dodd
Nancy Hall Bennett, nbennett@cacities.org
League of California Cities, cityletters@cacities.org
Representative Jared Huffman
Senator Mike McGuire