



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **MASSACCESS SUPPORTS LEGISLATION FILING 'AN ACT TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY ACCESS TELEVISION'**

***Senator John Keenan and Representative Ruth Balser sponsoring legislation***

BOSTON — MassAccess, the nonprofit trade organization representing community media stations throughout Massachusetts, is supporting legislation, 'An Act to Support Community Access Television,' filed by Senator John Keenan and Representative Ruth Balser and Representative Antonio Cabral. The Bill seeks to allow community media stations access to Electronic Programming Guides and channel signal quality that is comparable to pay stations - now and in the future.

Community media stations, or local cable access stations, also referred to as "PEG channels" to correspond with the mission of public, educational or government access, provide a valuable public service to communities across Massachusetts. Passage of the Bill would require cable companies to allow for broadcast of PEG channels in HD format and inclusion of programming in viewers' electronic guides. These two changes would allow for PEG channels to be on equal footing with most other cable television offerings, and allow for a higher quality and more accessible viewer experience.

"Knowledgeable and engaged citizens form the very foundation of our government," said Senator John Keenan. "Local access stations play such an important role in this regard, providing educational, relevant, and professional programming that helps citizens stay informed and active with their government at every level."

There are over 200 community media centers in Massachusetts, the highest concentration of media centers in the country. Community media centers, providing local Access TV is the last hyper-local outlet for citizens, providing coverage of thousands of hours of municipal meetings and providing transparency in local government. Channels provide local notices and emergency information for citizens and residents. Additionally, individual centers provide use of state of the art equipment and media literacy training, while serving as community hubs and a training ground for students who want to pursue careers in TV and film.

"We need to be increasing access to community media and local access TV, not diminishing it," said Representative Ruth Balser. "Preserving these centers should be a priority for each and every one of us. These local cable access centers offer a variety of educational programs, as well as access to local governmental proceedings and school activities, serving as the local 'eyes and ears' for many residents."

"Many residents rely on their local cable stations for access to local news and events that affect their daily lives," said Representative Antonio Cabral. "This bill ensures that they will continue to

have access to these stations, with the same quality we have all come to expect from our television stations.”

“We are proud to stand with Senator Keenan, Representative Balser, and Representative Cabral in support of this legislation, and we appreciate the support we have received,” said Bill Nay, President of MassAccess. “We want to ensure every citizen in Massachusetts has access to the news, information, education, and entertainment being provided by local cable TV centers.”

The bill was previously heard by the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy in November 2015, and given a “study order” in April 2016. Language relevant to the Bill was included in both the House and Senate versions of the Economic Development bill last year, but was omitted from the final version put forward.

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#### **About MassAccess**

Massachusetts Community Media, Inc. (MassAccess) is a non-profit, 501(c)(6), [membership-based], advocacy agency, guided by a volunteer board of community media professionals. Our goal is to ensure the future vitality of Massachusetts based community media centers by developing educational workshops, monitoring legislation, utilizing technology to inform and enhance community media centers, as well as acting as government liaisons to inform supporters across Massachusetts regarding the current political landscape in regards to media.