Senate

General Assembly

File No. 421

January Session, 2025

Substitute Senate Bill No. 545

Senate, April 2, 2025

The Committee on Energy and Technology reported through SEN. NEEDLEMAN of the 33rd Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the Senate, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

AN ACT CONCERNING THE SATISFACTION OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS QUALITY OF SERVICE STANDARDS AND PROHIBITING REMOTE RECONNECTION FEES.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. Subsection (b) of section 16-247a of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2025*):

(b) As used in sections 16-247a to 16-247c, inclusive<u>, as amended by this act</u>, 16-247e to 16-247h, inclusive, 16-247k, and sections 16-247m to 16-247r, inclusive:

(1) "Affiliate" means a person, firm or corporation which, with another person, firm or corporation, is under the common control of the same parent firm or corporation.

(2) "Competitive service" means (A) a telecommunications service deemed competitive in accordance with the provisions of section 16-

247f, (B) a telecommunications service reclassified by the authority as competitive in accordance with the provisions of section 16-247f, or (C) a new telecommunications service provided under a competitive service tariff accepted by the authority, in accordance with the provisions of section 16-247f, provided the authority has not subsequently reclassified the service set forth in subparagraph (A), (B) or (C) of this subdivision as noncompetitive pursuant to section 16-247f.

(3) "Emerging competitive service" means (A) a telecommunications service reclassified as emerging competitive in accordance with the provisions of section 16-247f, or (B) a new telecommunications service provided under an emerging competitive service tariff accepted by the authority, in accordance with the provisions of section 16-247f, or of a plan for an alternative form of regulation approved pursuant to section 16-247k, provided the authority has not subsequently reclassified the service set forth in subparagraph (A) or (B) of this subdivision as competitive or noncompetitive pursuant to section 16-247f.

(4) "Incumbent local exchange carrier" means a telephone company that began providing telephone service in the state before the adoption of the federal Telecommunications Act of 1996.

[(4)**]** (5) "Noncompetitive service" means (A) a telecommunications service deemed noncompetitive in accordance with the provisions of section 16-247f, (B) a telecommunications service reclassified by the authority as noncompetitive in accordance with the provisions of section 16-247f, or (C) a new telecommunications service provided under a noncompetitive service tariff accepted by the authority, in accordance with the provisions of section 16-19, and any applicable regulations, or of a plan for an alternative form of regulation approved pursuant to section 16-247k, provided the authority has not subsequently reclassified the service set forth in subparagraph (A), (B) or (C) of this subdivision as competitive or emerging competitive pursuant to section 16-247f.

[(5)**]** (6) "Private telecommunications service" means any telecommunications service **[**which**]** that is not provided for public hire as a common carrier service and is utilized solely for the telecommunications needs of the person that controls such service and any subsidiary or affiliate thereof, except for telecommunications service which enables two entities other than such person, subsidiary or affiliate to communicate with each other.

[(6)] (7) "Telecommunications service" means any transmission in one or more geographic areas (A) between or among points specified by the user, (B) of information of the user's choosing, (C) without change in the form or content of the information as sent and received, (D) by means of electromagnetic transmission, including but not limited to, fiber optics, microwave and satellite, (E) with or without benefit of any closed transmission medium, and (F) including all instrumentalities, facilities, apparatus and services, except customer premises equipment, which are used for the collection, storage, forwarding, switching and delivery of such information and are essential to the transmission.

[(7)] (8) "Network elements" means "network elements", as defined in 47 USC 153(a)(29).

Sec. 2. Section 16-247p of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2025*):

(a) [Not later than April 1, 2000, the] The Public Utilities Regulatory Authority shall, by regulations adopted pursuant to chapter 54, establish, [quality-of-service] monitor and enforce quality of service standards that shall apply to all telephone companies, incumbent local exchange carriers and certified telecommunications providers, [and to all telecommunications services] regardless of the transmission technology utilized, including, but not limited to, voice over Internet protocol. Such standards shall include, but not be limited to, measures relating to customer trouble reports, service outages, installation appointments and repeat problems as well as timeliness in responding to complaints or reports.

(1) The authority shall [include with the quality of service standards] adopt methodologies for monitoring compliance with and enforcement

of **[**such**]** the quality of service standards. Such monitoring shall include input from employees of telephone companies, incumbent local exchange carriers and certified telecommunications providers, including members of collective bargaining units.

(2) The authority shall adopt semiannual quality of service report requirements for any telephone company, incumbent local exchange carrier or certified telecommunications provider concerning such company, carrier or provider's compliance with the quality of service standards. Such semiannual reports shall be submitted by each such company, carrier or provider to the authority not later than the last day of the month following the semiannual reporting period established by the authority.

(3) The authority shall adopt exception report requirements for any telephone company, incumbent local exchange carrier or certified telecommunications provider that fails to meet any quality of service standard for more than two consecutive months. Any such exception report shall be submitted by any such company, carrier or provider to the authority not later than the last day of the month immediately following such company, carrier or provider's failure to meet a quality of service standard for more than two consecutive months.

(b) (1) Any company, carrier or provider that fails to comply with the semiannual report requirements or exception report requirements provided in subsection (a) of this section shall be fined not more than two thousand dollars for each violation in addition to any fines for failure to meet any quality of service standard. A violation of the provisions of this section concerning semiannual quality of service reports or exception reports shall constitute a continued violation pursuant to section 16-41 from the date the company, carrier or provider fails to timely provide any such report until the date the authority receives such report.

(2) The chairperson of the authority shall designate a representative of the authority's consumer affairs or enforcement unit to review, in consultation with the Office of Consumer Counsel, quality of service

reports submitted pursuant to this section and to report to the authority a company, carrier or provider's failure to meet any quality of service standard indicated in any semiannual report.

[(b)**]** (c) Not later than April 1, 2000, the authority shall, by regulations adopted pursuant to chapter 54, establish comprehensive performance standards and performance based reporting requirements for functions provided by a telephone company to a certified telecommunications provider, including, but not limited to, telephone company performance relating to customer ordering, preordering, provisioning, billing, maintenance and repair. Such service standards shall be sufficiently comprehensive to ensure that a telephone company meets its obligations under 47 USC 251. Such regulations may also contain provisions the authority deems necessary to prevent anticompetitive actions by any telephone company or certified telecommunications provider.

Sec. 3. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2025*) (a) For the purposes of this section:

(1) "Telecommunications company" means any public service company, telephone company or certified telecommunications provider, as such terms are defined in section 16-1 of the general statutes, offering telephone or telecommunications services, including voice over Internet protocol services, capable of accessing the 9-1-1 service.

(2) "Remote reconnection" means the reestablishment of usability of a telecommunications service that has been temporarily disconnected by remote means without the need for the telecommunications company to visit a customer's premises.

(3) "Reconnection fee" means any charge imposed by a telecommunications company to restore telephone or telecommunications service that has been temporarily disconnected for any reason.

(4) "Customer" means any individual or entity receiving telecommunications services from a telecommunications company.

(5) "Temporarily disconnected" means service that has been interrupted for fewer than fourteen days.

(b) No telecommunications company shall charge a reconnection fee to a customer for a remote reconnection following a temporary disconnection of service. The prohibition against reconnection fees in this subsection applies (1) regardless of the reason for such disconnection, including, but not limited to, nonpayment or other breaches of a service agreement by the customer, and (2) whether the customer requested a reconnection of service or the company initiated such reconnection.

(c) The provisions of this section shall not be construed to prohibit a telecommunications company from requiring a customer to pay the customer's outstanding balance due before restoring service, except that no such payment prior to restoration of service may be required for a residential telephone or telecommunications customer account associated with a dwelling unit wherein each adult resident (1) is over the age of sixty, or (2) meets the definition of blind, physically disabled or intellectually disabled, as defined in section 1-1f or 1-1g of the general statutes.

(d) The provisions of this section shall not apply to any fee associated with the establishment of a new account or the activation of new equipment with a telecommunications company.

(e) Any telecommunications company that violates the provisions of this section shall be subject to a civil penalty of not more than one thousand dollars per violation, per customer, and shall be required to reimburse any customer for any unlawfully charged reconnection fees.

(f) The Public Utilities Regulatory Authority shall have the authority to enforce compliance with this section and may designate a member from its consumer affairs or enforcement unit to conduct such investigation and enforcement.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	*October 1, 2025*	16-247a(b)
Sec. 2	*October 1, 2025*	16-247p
Sec. 3	*October 1, 2025*	New section

Statement of Legislative Commissioners:

In Section 3, technical changes were made for adherence to standard drafting conventions; and in Section 3(b), "temporary" was added before "disconnection", for accuracy.

ET *Joint Favorable Subst. -LCO*

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact:

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 26 $	FY 27 $
DEEP/PURA[1]	CC&PUCF - Cost	400,263	400,263
DEEP/PURA	CC&PUCF – Potential Revenue Gain	Minimal	Minimal

Note: CC&PUCF=Consumer Counsel and Public Utility Control Fund

Municipal Impact: None

Explanation

The bill results in additional annual costs to the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA), beginning in FY 26, of approximately $400,263, associated with broadening telephone and telecommunications quality of service standards and requiring PURA to adopt semiannual quality of service report requirements on compliance.

PURA would require two additional full-time staff to complete the requirements contained within the bill. The new positions would include: one full-time Supervisor of Technical Analysis, with an approximate annual salary of $139,819 (plus $116,413 in fringe benefits) and one full-time Consumer Information Representative, with an approximate annual salary of $78,594 ($65,437 in fringe benefits). The new staff would be responsible for quality of service standards and

[1]The fringe benefit costs for employees funded out of other appropriated funds are budgeted within the fringe benefit account of those funds, as opposed to the fringe benefit accounts within the Office of the State Comptroller. The estimated active employee fringe benefit cost associated with most personnel changes for other appropriated fund employees is 83.26% of payroll in FY 26.

reporting requirements associated with telephone and telecommunication companies.

The bill adds two new fines for telecommunication companies: 1) a fine of up $2,000 for any company or any incumbent local exchange carriers (ILEC) that fails to comply with semiannual or exception reporting requirements and 2) a $1,000 per violation, per customer fine for companies who do not comply with the reconnection prohibition. To the extent that these new fines result in additional violations, there could be a revenue gain to the Consumer Counsel and Public Utility Control Fund. It is unknown how many additional violations would occur annually, but the revenue increase is anticipated to be minimal.

Rate Payer Impact

The rate payer impact is indeterminate as the various services described in the bill are not rate regulated utilities. However, there could be a minimal savings to various rate payers associated with the prohibition of reconnection fees.

The Out Years

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to inflation.

OLR Bill Analysis
sSB 545

AN ACT CONCERNING THE SATISFACTION OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS QUALITY OF SERVICE STANDARDS AND PROHIBITING REMOTE RECONNECTION FEES.

SUMMARY

This bill broadens telephone and telecommunications quality of service standards by (1) explicitly applying them to incumbent local exchange carriers (ILECs) and telecommunications providers regardless of technology (e.g., voice over internet protocol (VOIP) services) and (2) adding reporting requirements and a maximum $2,000 fine for companies that fail to comply with them.

The bill also prohibits telecommunications companies from (1) charging a customer a reconnection fee to remotely reconnect service after a disconnection or (2) requiring customers in households where all adults are older, blind, or living with a disability to pay an outstanding balance before restoring service. Under the bill, companies that violate these prohibitions are subject to a civil penalty of up to $1,000 per violation, per customer, and must reimburse customers for any unlawfully charged reconnection fees. The bill requires the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) to enforce these prohibitions and allows PURA to designate a member from its consumer affairs or enforcement unit to conduct investigations and enforcement activities.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2025

QUALITY OF SERVICE STANDARDS

Current law requires PURA to adopt quality of service standards for telephone companies, certified telecommunications providers, and all telecommunications services. By law, a certified telecommunications provider is a person PURA certifies to provide intrastate telecommunications services. A telephone company is a telecommunications company that provides at least one noncompetitive or emerging competitive service (see BACKGROUND). Quality of service standards include measures related to customer trouble reports, service outages, installation appointments, repeat problems, and timeliness in responding to complaints or reports.

The bill removes a provision requiring the standards to apply to all telecommunications services, instead applying them regardless of the transmission technology used, including VOIP. It specifies that these requirements also apply to ILECs, which are telephone companies that began providing telephone service in the state before the federal Telecommunications Act of 1996.

Reports, Reviews, and Penalties

The bill requires PURA to adopt semiannual quality of service report requirements on compliance. Each telephone company, ILEC, and certified telecommunications provider must submit the reports to PURA by the last day of the month following the reporting period PURA establishes.

Under the bill, companies, ILECs, and providers that fail to meet any quality of service standard for more than two consecutive months must submit an exception report to PURA by the last day of the month immediately following those two months of failing to meet the standards. PURA must adopt exception report requirements.

The bill establishes a fine of up to $2,000 for any company, ILEC, or provider that fails to comply with semiannual or exception reporting requirements. The fine is in addition to any fines for failing to meet a quality of service standard. Reporting requirement violations are a continued violation from the date the company, ILEC, or provider fails to timely file a report until the date PURA receives the report. By law, for a continued violation, each day is deemed a separate offense.

The bill requires PURA's chairperson to designate a consumer affairs or enforcement unit representative to review the quality of service reports. The representative must do this in consultation with the Office of Consumer Counsel and report to PURA any failure to meet any quality of service standards indicated in any semiannual report.

PROHIBITED FEES AND PAYMENTS

The bill prohibits telecommunications companies from charging a customer a reconnection fee to remotely reconnect service after a service disconnection. Under the bill, a reconnection fee is a charge to restore telephone or telecommunications service that has been temporarily disconnected (i.e. interrupted for fewer than 14 days) for any reason. The prohibition applies regardless of (1) why the disconnection occurred (e.g., nonpayment or a breach of service agreement) or (2) whether the reconnection was initiated by the company or at the customer's request.

The bill also prohibits a telecommunications company from making a customer pay an outstanding balance before restoring service if each adult resident in the dwelling unit associated with the account is over age 60, blind, or living with a physical or intellectual disability (see BACKGROUND). It otherwise allows these companies to require a customer to pay the outstanding balance before restoring service.

The bill's prohibitions apply to telecommunications companies, which are any public service company, telephone company, or certified telecommunications provider that offers telephone or telecommunications services, including VOIP services, able to access the 9-1-1 service. They do not apply to any fee to establish a new account or activate new equipment with a telecommunications company.

BACKGROUND

Telecommunications Regulation

The law subjects telecommunications services to varying levels of regulation based on the service's degree of competitiveness and the type of company providing the service. Generally, it applies more stringent regulation of telephone companies providing noncompetitive services (i.e., legacy utility phone companies) and less stringent regulatory requirements for telecommunications providers providing competitive services. This framework emerged after the federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 as a way to implement deregulation by creating a process for providers to certify that their services are competitive and therefore subject to lighter regulation.

Disability Definitions

By law, a person is blind if the person's central visual acuity does not exceed 20/200 in the better eye with correcting lenses, or if the person's visual acuity is greater than 20/200 but vision fields are limited such that the visual field's widest diameter subtends an angle no greater than 20 degrees (CGS § 1-1f).

A physical disability is any chronic physical handicap, infirmity, or impairment, whether congenital or due to bodily injury, organic processes, or changes from an illness (e.g., epilepsy, deafness, hearing impairment, or reliance on a wheelchair) (CGS § 1-1f).

An intellectual disability is a significant limitation in intellectual functioning existing concurrently with adaptive behavior deficits that began during the developmental period before age 18 (CGS § 1-1g).

COMMITTEE ACTION

Energy and Technology Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea	16	Nay	9	(03/13/2025)