

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
Before the
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Docket No. DT 23-103

CONSOLIDATED COMMUNICATIONS HOLDINGS, INC. AND
CONDOR HOLDINGS, LLC
JOINT PETITION TO APPROVE TRANSFER OF CONTROL

DIRECT TESTIMONY OF JAMES GOLDEN

On behalf of Intervenor
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 2320

April 26, 2024

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1 **Q1. Please state your name, employment, title, business address.**

2 A1. My name is James Golden. I am the Business Manager of the International
3 Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 2320 and also serve as Chair of System
4 Council T-9 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, collectively referred
5 to herein as the Union. My business address is 46 Third Street, Manchester, NH 03102.

6 **Q2. On whose behalf are you providing this testimony?**

7 A2. I am providing this testimony on behalf the Union.

8 **Q2. Please describe your employment history.**

9 A2. I am currently on a leave of absence from Consolidated Communications, Inc.
10 (CCI or the Company) but have been employed by CCI and its predecessor entities for 28
11 years. My position of record with CCI is Splice Service Technician, which is a class of
12 employees who splice cable as part of Company construction projects and install and
13 maintain telephone and related service for CCI customers. In January 2017 I began my
14 leave of absence when I became a full-time Assistant Business Manager for the Union. In
15 June 2020 I was appointed Business Manager of the Union, and was elected to that
16 position in June 2021.

17 **Q3. What are your duties as the Business Manager of Local 2320?**

18 A3. As Business Manager, I am the principal executive officer of Local 2320 with
19 responsibility to represent all of the employees represented by the Local, including those
20 employed by CCI. Primarily, I negotiate with employers on behalf of represented workers
21 and file grievances and other types of charges against employers for their failure to
22 comply with their legal and statutory obligations.

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1 **Q4. What is the System Council T-9 and what are your obligations as Chair of the**
2 **Council?**

3 A4. The System Council T-9 is an intermediate-level labor organization comprised of
4 Local 2320 in New Hampshire, Local 2327 in Maine, and Local 2326 in Vermont and
5 serves as the bargaining agent for all three Local Unions in their relationship with CCI.
6 All three Local Unions are signatories to a collective bargaining agreement with CCI and
7 various sub-entities of CCI covering four bargaining units of employees across all three
8 states. As Chair of the System Council, I act as spokesperson for all three Local Unions
9 in dealings with CCI management relating to matters affecting all three states.

10 **Q5. What is the purpose of your testimony?**

11 A5. I am providing this testimony to ensure that the Public Utilities Commission is
12 aware of the challenges facing the workforce in attempting to perform the work of the
13 Company that is necessary to satisfy the Company's statutory and regulatory obligations
14 to the customers in and residents of New Hampshire.

15 **Q6. What has been the Union's chief concern in the time since Consolidated**
16 **Communications, Inc. (CCI) took over operations in Northern New England?**

17 A6. The Union's chief concern in the time since 2017 when CCI took over operations
18 in Northern New England from FairPoint Communications is the steady loss of jobs in
19 New Hampshire and across all three states. The following are the numbers of IBEW-
20 represented employees in all three states at the time when CCI took over operations in
21 2017 versus the numbers of IBEW-represented employees today:

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	<u>2017</u>	<u>today</u>	<u>loss</u>	<u>percentage loss</u>	
1					
2	New Hampshire (L. 2320)	422	323	99	23.46%
3	Vermont (L. 2326)	187	153	34	18.30%
4	Maine (L. 2327)	550	362	188	34.18%

5 The numbers in Maine include the elimination of twelve additional jobs in March 2024
6 after the application was made in this proceeding (and in the parallel proceeding in
7 Maine).

8 At a time when the telecommunications industry is booming, particularly here in
9 New England where the Company has been the recipient of millions of dollars in grants
10 and subsidies to increase and improve broadband service, it is shocking to see such
11 drastic reductions in the numbers of employees. The Union is obviously concerned about
12 the huge elimination of stable, good-paying jobs in New Hampshire and across the
13 Region, but the loss of workforce also significantly impacts the Company's ability to
14 meet its obligations to the people of New Hampshire.

15 **Q7. What concerns, if any, does the Union have with regard to the Company's**
16 **investment in the tools necessary to support operations in New Hampshire and**
17 **across the region?**

18 A7. One of the primary tools employees use in supporting operations here in New
19 Hampshire and across Northern New England is the fleet of specialized vehicles needed
20 to perform the work. On the whole, CCI's fleet of vehicles in the region, particularly the
21 line trucks and bucket trucks, is aging, and many vehicles are in significant states of

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1 disrepair. The employees and their Union are concerned at the slow pace with which the
2 Company is replacing these vehicles.

3 **Q8. What other concerns, if any, does the Union have with regard to the Company's**
4 **physical plant?**

5 A8. In July 2023, the Brookings Institution issued a report about lead-sheathed
6 telephone cables, which began drawing attention to the potential adverse health impacts
7 both on employees who have worked and continue to work with those parts of the
8 physical plant of the Company as well as to the general public. The Union and the
9 Company have only recently begun discussing the implications of the significant amounts
10 of lead in the physical plant. While the Union is hopeful that the Company will continue
11 to investigate the extent of the problem in New Hampshire and across the region, the
12 Union remains concerned that the matter be addressed comprehensively in terms of
13 (1) lead abatement, (2) protections for employees who are required to come into contact
14 with lead in the physical plant in the course of their work, and (3) the investigation and
15 amelioration of any health impacts on employees who have been assigned to work with
16 lead during their careers.

17 **Q9. Does the Union oppose approval of the transaction?**

18 A9. No. The Union does not oppose the Commission's approval of the transaction
19 provided that the Applicants demonstrate their commitment to employing a stable and
20 appropriately sized workforce in the region who are equipped with the tools necessary to
21 perform the work needed to serve the customers and residents of New Hampshire and

1 that the Applicants further demonstrate their commitment to ensuring the health and
2 safety of the workforce and the public at large.

3 **Q10. Does this conclude your testimony?**

4 A10. Yes, but I am available to answer additional questions as this proceeding continues.