



Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Technology, and Utilities

LD 1975: "An Act to Eliminate the ConnectMaine Authority by Repealing the Advanced Technology Infrastructure Act"

October 30, 2025

Chairs Lawrence and Sachs, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology. My name is Kate Gore, I am the State Director of Government Affairs for Charter Communications, and I am here today to testify in Support of LD 1975: "An Act to Eliminate the ConnectMaine Authority by Repealing the Advanced Technology Infrastructure Act".

Charter Communications provides broadband services to 306 communities in Maine serving more than 440,000 customers and we employ over 700 Maine residents. In 2024 Charter invested over \$100 million dollars and expanded our network to reach an additional 15,000 homes in Maine. Our fiber rich network delivers some of the fastest broadband speeds found anywhere in the country, and we're not stopping there. That's why we've also initiated a project to increase the power of our internet network to deliver symmetrical and multi-Gigabit speeds across our Maine service area.

We're also working to ensure high-speed internet remains within reach for every Mainer, regardless of income. That's why we launched Spectrum Internet Assist, our low-cost broadband offering available to qualifying low-income families and seniors, for \$15/per month with no data caps.

My testimony of support focuses on repeal of the 0.25% ConnectMaine assessment and the \$0.10 surcharge fee currently applied to cable video, satellite, telephone and mobile service providers under the statutes implementing the Advanced Technology Infrastructure Act. Repealing these fees could save Maine taxpayers upwards of \$2 million a year.

These fees were created and imposed at a time when there was very little, if any, state investment in broadband expansion, and certainly no federal investment. At the time, this was an important funding stream for residents challenged by the economic and social impacts of not having broadband connectivity.

The Maine Connectivity Authority (MCA) and its predecessor, the ConnectMaine Authority, have made significant progress in deploying broadband. According to MCA's 2024 Annual Impact Report, since 2020 there has been an investment of over \$250 million. These funds were deployed to 100 projects and have directly funded 86,000 connections. Today, Maine's Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program provides an estimated \$272 million in federal resources, enabling the state to connect the last unserved and underserved locations by leveraging these federal dollars with private investment to connect the remaining approximately 26,000 unserved locations. This influx of federal dollars into Maine and the work that MCA has done ensuring the funding has gone to unserved locations makes additional state assessments less necessary.

Affordability remains a key policy goal of the Maine Connectivity Authority. Additional fees, when imposed on consumers or providers, make services less affordable. Given the large federal investment in Maine, continuing to impose a 0.25% assessment and \$0.10 surcharge fee is duplicative and counterproductive.

In addition, the current ConnectMaine assessment applies to cable and satellite video service providers but not to streaming or other over-the-top video services, creating an uneven playing field. This discriminatory practice disadvantages cable providers, distorts market competition, and ultimately harms consumers. Repealing these fees restores fairness, promotes technology neutrality, and ensures all platforms compete on equal terms.

Thank you for your consideration. I welcome your questions and remain committed to working with the Legislature, the Maine Connectivity Authority, and other broadband stakeholders to ensure every Mainer has access to high-speed, reliable, affordable service.