

Senator Breen, Representative Gattine and distinguished members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, my name is Greg Dugal and I am here today representing Hospitality Maine, which was formerly the Maine Restaurant Association and Maine Innkeepers Association, in support of LD 295, which will assist all Maine citizens who live in rural areas and beyond and also help rural and out of the way hospitality businesses from inns and resorts with conference and guest room needs to restaurants with meeting rooms and much needed wi-fi upgrades.

Our guests from away are generally not used to lapses in service like cell phone coverage and limited access to the internet and broadband in general. I suffer all of these challenges where I live and when I am working from home people I speak with from Washington, DC to Portland can't believe that I have to make a call on a land line or wait until I get to work to download a large document or be part of an elaborate webinar, but this is rural Maine and we have come to learn to live with it.

In this day and age, hospitality properties need to remain relevant, increased broadband would give hospitality operators an opportunity to stay ahead of the technology curve by integrating modern devices into their establishments: mobile keys, smart TV's, room controls and interactive digital signage among other things.

It would also provide comfort to a guest staying in areas in the State not currently served by adequate broadband that the CAD drawing or other data heavy task that needs to be accomplished mid-week of their vacation can be done and they can still come and enjoy the time before and after. Like it or not, being connected to work on vacation has become more and more necessary and for me makes me feel so much better when I accomplish those tasks, if need be, from a remote location.

There are so many reasons why increased broadband is critical to the success of the State as a whole and you will hear many of them today. In the interest of time I have limited the aspects of what increased bandwidth could provide the hospitality industry for future success, so we encourage the committee to set funds aside, through LD 295 or some other vehicle, for this critical element of our economy moving forward with an ought to pass recommendation and we thank you for your time.