

**Testimony of GrowSmart Maine in support of LD 221: 2022-2023**  
**BIENNIAL BUDGET Part AA**

2021

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February 24, 2021

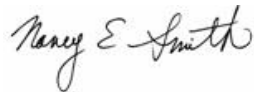
Senator Breen, Representative Pierce, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, my name is Nancy Smith and I am the Executive Director of GrowSmart Maine. We are a statewide non-partisan organization working to create lasting prosperity without sacrificing the quality of life that defines Maine.

We support policies, programs and projects that define and protect the value of our unique built and natural places while supporting long term economic opportunity. It is with this intention that we have been actively engaged in the Maine Broadband Coalition since its inception and are advocates for strategic funding and sound policy to support affordable, high speed internet.

Today, we speak in support of Part AA of the Biennial Budget, which clarifies a funding mechanism for ConnectMaine by correcting an error in the drafting of Part SSSS of the budget.

Affordable high-speed internet is an essential service, comparable to electricity when it comes to daily purposes from remote learning to health and wellness to the ability to work and conduct business. ConnectMaine is our state's central convener and funding to achieve universal availability of broadband to all Maine households and businesses and as such, must be adequately funded. It is appropriate to include cell phones in the mix of funding because these essential tools also require broadband infrastructure to function. This bill adapts a current funding stream that currently includes other beneficiaries of internet infrastructure and as such, should move forward as part of the biennial budget.

Best,



Nancy E Smith  
Executive Director