

Maine Broadband Coalition

Testimony in Support of LD 307: Resolve, to Establish the Maine Artificial Intelligence Data Center Coordination Council February 5, 2026

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology,

My name is Joe Oliva, and I offer this testimony on behalf of the Maine Broadband Coalition in support of LD 307.

The Maine Broadband Coalition represents a wide range of perspectives in Maine's broadband landscape but is fundamentally concerned with giving voice to internet users across the state to secure universal, affordable, and equitable access to broadband connectivity that serves both current and future needs.

For the better part of a decade, we've worked with Maine communities on broadband infrastructure expansion, access, digital equity projects and in the Maine state legislature on policy that allows for quiet enjoyment of the internet by the end user. We believe that in an increasingly digital world, the role of community stewardship - through a variety of means - is coupled with self-determination.

Community-driven broadband projects brought fiber networks to some of the most rural communities and regions in the state, effectively cutting the corner on market-based expansion that left them in the dark and federal funding that still hasn't arrived. Digital equity work happening in local libraries, through the Regional and Wabanaki Broadband Partnership program, and within Maine-based organizations like GiveIT.GetIT. and the National Digital Equity Center opens the door for full participation in the digital economy wherever you live in Maine, no matter your background.

When Mainers have the right tools to make decisions about their digital futures, good things happen. We urge the passage of LD 307 because it correctly recognizes the imperative of the moment; that, with support from the state, Maine communities can navigate the decisionmaking process of where, how, and if AI data centers are built in their communities.

Specifically, we support the Data Center Council's duties related to:

- **Section 2, Article 7**, supporting communities through development of Community Benefits Agreements related to data center development. [The data is clear](#)¹ - the digital divide is a driver for economic inequality. Maine has a \$35 million plan for digital equity activities without funding due to cancellation of the Digital Equity Act, and an even greater hole when factored in with last-minute changes

¹"What Is the Digital Divide? Meaning, Causes & Impact", Syracuse University
<https://ischool.syracuse.edu/what-is-the-digital-divide/>

to the BEAD program. At bare minimum, CBA's should account for local digital inequities as related to access, adoption, and skills education.

[These types of agreements can, and should](#)², reflect the broad impact of data centers with an equally broad set of community considerations including environmental and resource management, land use, economic development, infrastructure improvement, and more. These types of agreements would go a long way towards ensuring transparency, affordability, and sustainability for communities.

MBC recognizes the importance of digital innovation and its transformative impact on lives, businesses, and society. The burgeoning age of artificial intelligence is poised to create radically new opportunities and challenges, and it seems appropriate that its physical embodiment in data centers presents a new class of infrastructure that bends expectations for what industrial facilities consume and produce.

As high-speed broadband expands into Maine's most rural communities, the possibility of breathing new life that leverages the digital economy into remote communities is no longer just theoretical, it's becoming tangible.

But realizing this vision requires more than infrastructure investment. It demands a collective effort and community advocates who never lose sight of what's in the balance. A future where data centers are thoughtfully sited, operated with greater efficiency, and lead to equitable outcomes for local communities will only emerge if stakeholders, policymakers, and community leaders engage proactively to shape it together.

To that end, we respectfully urge the committee to pass LD 307 and are willing to assist the committee in any way that is helpful. We stand ready to support the Council once it is created, offering our expertise in community-driven planning related to digital infrastructure and our numerous community partnerships..

² "Why community benefit agreements are necessary for data centers", The Brookings Institution
<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/why-community-benefit-agreements-are-necessary-for-data-centers/>