



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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***Testimony of Rep. Lydia Crafts in support of
LD 1967, An Act to Support Municipal Franchise Agreements
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology***

Good morning, Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology. I'm Representative Lydia Crafts, and I serve House District 46. I'm here in support of An Act to Support Municipal Franchise Agreements.

You will hear from folks with a deeper understanding than me of the mechanics of this piece of legislation. I am here today to voice my support for LD 1967 for two reasons. One, it is vital that we deliberately modernize our state to keep pace with our increasingly technologically focused society, and for us, this includes the expansion of fiber optic internet. Many of us here today have likely streamed programming online that we would have previously watched on television. Of course, with streaming services comes decreased reliance on cable television and, thus, decreased franchise fees. This bill helps address the discrepancy between cable and video streaming providers and creates a level playing field, requiring franchise fees from both.

In these times of modernization, our local access programming station (LCTV) keeps folks connected with the important events and issues that matter to our rural and urban communities alike. I learned firsthand how important LCTV is to our community when I first ran for office. It was the spring of 2020 and we were in the midst of COVID-19. LCTV initiated daily briefings with MaineHealth administrators on updates about health and safety conditions. Fast-acting and locally focused, LCTV took the lead in responding to a need and watched their viewership flourish. At the same time, I was eager for opportunities to reach voters as we navigated the pandemic. In collaboration with our local newspaper, Larry Sidelinger helped arrange televised candidate debates for all of the local races that year. The ability to create content that is informative, relevant and suited for a specific community is the gift of local access television. Whether it's Medomak Valley football games, selectboard meetings or celebrating the new Chamber of Commerce visitor's center, LCTV is a vital piece of our community's foundation.

I'm asking for your support today so that we can continue to provide communities across the State of Maine with modern, reliable, high quality local access programming. I'll be happy to answer any questions.

District 46: Bristol, Damariscotta, Newcastle, Nobleboro and Monhegan Plantation