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Senator, District 25
Senate Majority Leader

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

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Falmouth, ME 04105

***Testimony of Senate Majority Leader Teresa S. Pierce introducing
LD 692, An Act to Increase Support for Statewide Emergency Broadcast Messaging
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
April 3, 2025***

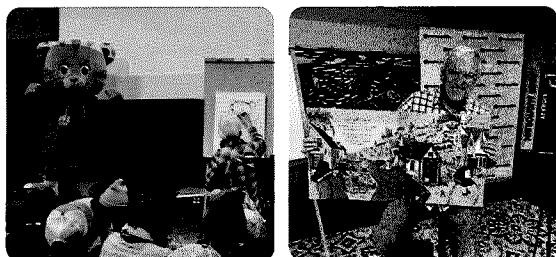
Chair Rafferty, Chair Murphy, and esteemed colleagues of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Teresa S. Pierce. I serve as the Senate Majority Leader, representing Senate District 25, which includes Falmouth, Cumberland, North Yarmouth, Yarmouth (majority), Gray, and Long Island. I am here today to introduce **LD 692, An Act to Increase Support for Statewide Emergency Broadcast Messaging**.

During viral pandemics, natural disasters and unforeseen public safety emergencies, we rely on the statewide nature and value of Maine Public's broadcasting system to disseminate timely and accurate information. Mainers rely on it to access weather and power restoration updates as well as guidance from emergency personnel. Last year, when our state experienced the destructive winter storms that swept the coast and swelled our rivers, our constituents relied on up to date information and guidance from our state emergency broadcast system.

LD 692 would provide \$350,000 in ongoing funding to improve and sustain, in accordance with MRS Title 20-A §852, Maine's emergency alert system. Maine Public's family of channels provide critical communications about public safety and emergency alert services to Mainers, whether they live in Houlton, Hollis, or Hancock. As you can see from the handout, which has been included in your packet, their transmission network includes translators and microwave links at nearly 30 sites across the state that must be on-air at all times as required by state law.

Representatives from Maine Public are here to speak in greater depth about this bill and the services they provide. I am grateful for their leadership on this matter and for all they offer to inform and engage our constituents.

Thank you to the committee for the opportunity to present this bill. I am happy to answer any questions you may have, but I would defer specific questions to the representatives from Maine Public.



Maine Public is committed to providing valuable content and resources to improve educational opportunities for students across Maine. It starts with our PBS Kids educational programming on Maine Public Television and on the 24/7 PBS Kids Channel, a bevy of online lesson plans and resources from PBS Learning Media, and rich programming like *Nature*, *NOVA*, and *Frontline*. Specialty programs and initiatives to engage directly with Maine's youth include our Daniel Tiger literacy events at libraries across the state aimed at Maine's youngest readers and families. We produce *High School Quiz Show Maine* celebrating academic achievement at the high school level. And watching Maine Public's High School Basketball Championship coverage is a treasured tradition for families across the state.



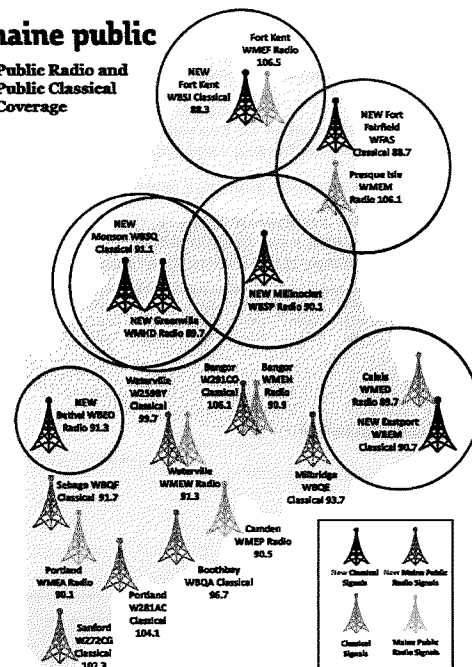
***Every day Maine Public connects
the people of Maine and our region to each other and
to the world through the open exchange of information,
ideas, and cultural content.***



maine public
INSPIRING · ENTERTAINING · TRUSTED



Maine Public Radio and Maine Public Classical Signal Coverage





WMEM TV and FM transmitting from the top of Mars Hill Mountain to Aroostook County.

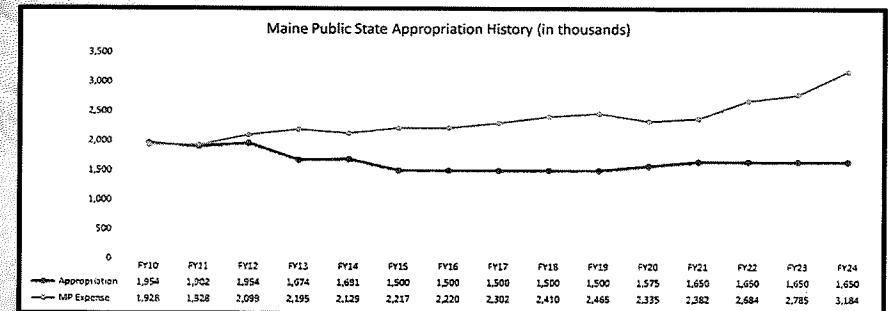
Maine Public's History as Partner with the State of Maine

For over 60 years, Maine Public has been a trusted source for news, public health and safety information, and educational resources. Governed by State statute, Maine Public is required to maintain a statewide broadcast network to distribute free programming to the citizens of Maine. In partnership with Maine's Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), that same broadcast network provides distribution for the Emergency Alert System (EAS) and other public safety messages. Maine Public also provides public safety datacasting for television and the PBS WARN system, which delivers emergency alerts to wireless carriers.

"An annual appropriation for operating, constructing, equipping, maintaining, improving and replacing facilities of the corporation must be made in amounts sufficient to ensure delivery of broadcast sources throughout the State."

— Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 852, subsection 3

From FY10-FY12, Maine Public's appropriation was roughly in line with actual technical expenses, as intended.



But for more than a dozen years, since FY2012, Maine Public's actual technical expenses have exceeded the appropriation. By FY24, the gap grew to more than \$1.5 million. Instead of meeting the full cost, the FY24 appropriation covered just 52%. These are technical expenses, not the cost of programming.

This gap will continue to grow. In 2025, three factors are driving up Maine Public's technical network expenses:

- New UHF television transmitters that require increased power (while providing greater service).
- Seven new FM radio signals that are expanding coverage to rural areas.
- The overall rising cost of electricity.

MJRP/ARPA funding in 2021 led to infrastructure upgrades including new UHF television transmitters that provide greater coverage and better service. These transmitters require more electricity and account for more than \$260,000 in increased power costs last year.

Maine Public received a federal grant to add seven new FM radio signals to extend coverage to rural areas. This is CDS funding for capital infrastructure but does not help with operational costs. Electricity for the new stations is projected to add over \$200,000 in annual expense in 2025.

Maine Public asks for your support of this legislation submitted by Senator Pierce:

An Act to Increase Support for Statewide Emergency Broadcast Messaging

Summary: This bill increases the appropriation for Maine Public Broadcasting Corporation from \$1.65 million to \$2.0 million to align State funding more closely with the statutory requirement to provide emergency broadcast messaging for public safety.

