

**OPPOSED: LD. 1975 - An Act to Eliminate the ConnectMaine Authority by Repealing the Advanced Technology Infrastructure Act**  
October 30, 2025



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

As President of the Maine Connectivity Authority (MCA), Maine's agency to plan, develop, invest in, and sustain our connectivity, I testify today to present our qualified opposition to LD 1975 in its current form and function. MCA appreciates the Sponsor's intent to streamline the organizational structure of Maine's connectivity agencies. Unfortunately, this bill would undermine the bipartisan legislative framework established in 2021 to tackle Maine's connectivity issues, and threatens crucial funding for Maine's goals as federal funding is suspended and uncertain. MCA requests that the Committee determine that the bill ought not to pass.

In June 2021, MCA was created through bipartisan legislation. In July 2022, the ConnectMaine Authority (CME) and MCA entered into a Memorandum of Understanding to functionally integrate operations to ensure that a single agency was equipped to address Maine's connectivity needs. The MOU assigns all of CME duties and responsibilities to MCA through June 30, 2027, and stipulates that all CME funds be directed to MCA. Since July 2022, MCA has served as the staff for CME's Board of Directors and managed CME's portfolio of activities, including many grant projects, still in various stages of completion, closeout, and monitoring, as well as implementation of CME data collection activities under CME rules. The MOU between CME and MCA includes a timeline for evaluation of statutory consolidation by June 30, 2027.<sup>1</sup> This MOU and its implementation have been extensively reviewed with the Committee, both MCA and CME Boards of Directors and DECD.

We share the sponsor's longer term goal of fully integrating the two agencies, but dissolving it now as outlined in LD 1975 would increase administrative expenses and put the remaining work of the MCA, including ongoing federal grant funding, at risk. With a \$28M federal grant from NTIA to CME almost complete, and another \$272M of NTIA BEAD infrastructure funding uncertain, additional changes to funding sources are premature. An evaluation of the process and a corresponding proposal should be considered by early 2027.

LD 1975 eliminates the CME fund, which is the only dedicated, recurring, funding source to support connectivity in the State of Maine. MCA (and CME) statutory goals include not just a commitment to universal access - but to meet future needs supporting all businesses, residents, and institutions; maximizing federal, private, and state resources to provide broadband service in unserved and underserved areas. We have made tremendous progress in the last few years - but the work is not done and this bill will create costs and inhibit progress.<sup>2</sup> The CME Fund has allowed MCA to secure, administer and deploy hundreds of millions of dollars in federal funding (including \$60M in competitive funds). Through these uses MCA is able to attend to the critical functions in the CME Statute that set our broadband standards.

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<sup>1</sup> CME-MCA MOU: <https://drive.google.com/drive/search?q=CME%20MOU>

<sup>2</sup> MCA Statute: <https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/35-a/title35-Asec9202-A.html>

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MCA's operating budget allows the organization to effectively and efficiently deliver programmatic deployment of over \$100 MM per year. The CME service contract represents an average of \$2 MM of MCA operating revenues per year currently, covering approximately one-third of MCA's overall operating expense budget. Without the CME service contract, MCA would operate at a significant deficit and be limited in the ability to deploy and administer close to \$500 MM of state and federal funds. Federal funding does not provide adequate administrative costs to administer the extensive grant requirements.

This legislation is particularly ill-timed because it eliminates the only remaining dedicated funding to support work that is not targeted to building infrastructure. While MCA continues to receive federal funds for last and middle mile deployment, the federal government recently curtailed all funding that would support statutory goals designed to promote adoption, affordability and economic opportunity. In May 2025, \$35M from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act was terminated, impacting Mainers most affected by the digital divide. This directly resulted in regional organizations, schools, libraries, public safety agencies, health care facilities, and community based organizations to be deprived of the funding needed to purchase affordable devices, train people to use new technology, mitigate a growing threat of cyber crimes and enable more telehealth services.

While the federal government appears to be proceeding with Maine's \$272M BEAD program allocation, it is also not yet assured (as I presented to this Committee in September.) A \$48M proposal awaits approval, and guidance for the remaining \$200M is pending, delaying critical infrastructure investments around expanded wireless and cellular services, cybersecurity, workforce and affordability measures.<sup>3</sup>

LD 1975 also would undermine the current authority for annual data collection from the broadband market sector, found in 35-A MRS §9207 and the CME implementing rule found in Maine Rules Chapter 101. This is an essential tool for development of infrastructure mapping, price, and revenue information needed to understand the market sector status and to guide planning of future infrastructure needs. Any future consolidation legislation must address the fate of the CME rules, and preserve continuity in current data collection.

Repealing the Advanced Technology Infrastructure Act and dissolving ConnectMaine at this time would be premature. MCA is looking forward to working with sponsors and members to streamline organizational structure, funding, and policy over the next year and to provide a smooth transition for Maine citizens.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Butcher".

Andrew Butcher  
President, Maine Connectivity Authority

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<sup>3</sup> [September 2025 MCA Presentation to EUT outlining BEAD Final Proposal](#)