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Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

Neither For Nor Against

LD 1975 - An Act to Eliminate the ConnectMaine Authority by Repealing the Advanced Technology

Infrastructure Act

October 28, 2025

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and members of the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee, my name is Tanya Emery, and I am providing conditional testimony neither for nor against LD 1975, but to outline staff concerns on this matter. The Maine Municipal Association's (MMA) elected 70-member Legislative Policy Committee (LPC) did not take a position on this bill, but will consider the matter during their January meeting. MMA will submit official testimony once the LPC has established a position. For reference, MMA is a nonpartisan, nonprofit member service organization and aims to help provide policy solutions that work for all residents in Maine, and the LPC guides the advocacy efforts and establishes positions on bills of municipal interest.

Municipalities across Maine face growing demand for reliable, high-speed internet, with the recent pandemic underscoring just how essential broadband access is for education, healthcare, business, social connectivity, and civic engagement. Unfortunately for many communities, particularly rural and underserved areas, private providers have been either unwilling or unable to provide the necessary infrastructure. Some local governments have stepped up to meet this need, yet most municipalities do not have the ability to do this alone and must rely on state or federal subsidy programs to deliver broadband through public-private partnerships. The transition proposed under LD 1975 shortchanges areas of the state relying on those public-private partnerships to deliver broadband. The Maine Connectivity Authority's work to leverage substantial federal infrastructure funds to benefit Maine people and places will be jeopardized by the repeal of the Advanced Technology Infrastructure Act and dissolution of the ConnectMaine Authority at this time.

Repealing the Advanced Technology Infrastructure Act before Maine has met even one of the stated goals appears to be shortsighted. MMA urges full consideration of the goals of the state broadband policy, set in statute and critical to Maine's economic competitiveness, and benchmark progress prior to restructuring the organization designed by the Legislature to help Maine meet those goals.

Last session, MMA's LPC supported LD 1096, *An Act to Allow Municipalities That Have Financed Fiber-optic Broadband Infrastructure to Use Loans or Grants to Repay Associated Debt*, as it provided more tools in the toolbox for communities to address their broadband needs. While that bill ultimately failed, the point stands - at this critical time, when so much of our world relies on the internet, taking tools out of the toolbox will further limit state and municipal responses to identified connectivity needs.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.



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