



Teresa Schmitt Pierce
Senator, District 25
Senate Majority Leader

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

6 Waites Landing Road
Falmouth, ME 04105

Testimony of Senator Teresa S. Pierce presenting
LD 2003, "An Act to Improve Localization of Emergency Broadcast Messaging"
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Good morning, Chair Rafferty, Chair Murphy, and esteemed colleagues of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Teresa Pierce, and I represent Senate District 25, which includes Falmouth, Cumberland, North Yarmouth, part of Yarmouth, Gray and Long Island. I am pleased to be here this morning to introduce LD 2003, An Act to Improve Localization of Emergency Broadcast Messaging.

We are fortunate in Maine that our public radio and television stations are one statewide network, which we all know as Maine Public.

What is less widely known is the fact that, in addition to airing their regular news, music and other programming, Maine Public's statewide network is the backbone of the state's Emergency Alert System (EAS), which we also know as emergency broadcasting. These systems and networks provide critical communication, public safety and emergency alert services to Mainers, whether they live in Houlton or Hollis.

To provide the vital emergency notification system, Maine Public partners closely and coordinates regularly with the Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA). And as the only broadcaster in Maine that serves our entire state, Maine Public also partners with commercial broadcasters to distribute emergency messages to commercial radio and TV stations.

The State of Maine has long invested in this extensive statewide network, and the bill before you today proposes to add an important upgrade to the network: the ability to localize an emergency message to the area of the state where the emergency response is needed, and prevent it from being broadcast and creating confusion or other problems, in parts of Maine where there is not a need for emergency response.

Simply put, it means an emergency alert about a dangerous situation in The County would be targeted at The County and not broadcast statewide, and vice versa, a localized emergency in Sanford wouldn't be heard up in the County.



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Maine Public's president, Rick Schneider is also here today to provide additional detail. This bill seeks one-time, non-recurring funds, in the relatively modest amount of \$600,000, to provide the state infrastructure needed to support and expand this incredibly valuable public safety service.

I hope you will approve this proposal so that we can modernize and improve our emergency management system to ensure that Maine people are able to benefit from localized emergency alerts. At a time when information - and misinformation - moves with increasing speed and breadth, it is more important than ever to ensure the nature and scope of an emergency is understood. For those deciding whether or how to respond – the difference could be vital.

Thank you for your time and consideration.