

**TESTIMONY OF VANESSA CORSON, Legislative Liaison and Public Information  
Officer for Maine Emergency Management Agency, Department of Defense,  
Veterans and Emergency Management**

**BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, UTILITIES AND  
TECHNOLOGY**

LD 1008 – *“An Act to Require Joint Use Entities to Establish Permanent Liaisons with All County  
Emergency Management Agencies.”*

Position – Support

April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and distinguished members of the Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology - my name is Vanessa Corson. I'm the Legislative Liaison and Public Information Officer for Maine Emergency Management Agency. I'm here to provide testimony in support of LD 1008 "An Act to Require Joint Use Entities to Establish Permanent Liaisons with All County Emergency Management Agencies." This legislation requires joint use entities like telecommunication service providers, public utilities, voice service providers, unlit and dark fiber providers, information service providers, and wholesale or retail competitive local exchange carriers to establish liaisons in any of Maine's 16 counties where the company has a facility. That liaison is responsible for communicating and assisting during a disaster or civil emergency.

Take the windstorm of October 2017 for example: as a result of that disaster, downed wires made some roads impassable for several days in counties across the state. Even when electric utilities dispatched crews to repair their own lines, those companies were not allowed to remove downed lines owned by other entities. This resulted in some roads remaining blocked for an extended period of time, without recourse, since several of the entities in question did not provide timely contact information to emergency response partners. This delay could be devastating if emergency vehicles were unable to get through to respond to a life-threatening incident.

Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) feels it is necessary to establish and maintain ongoing relationships with these entities, not just one that would be initiated in a crisis, but one that could be strengthened in advance of disasters through training and exercise activities. There's an old saying in emergency management — a disaster is the wrong time to exchange business cards. Finally, MEMA would like to recommend that each county is given the choice of whether the liaisons for these entities

are physically located in their Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) during disasters or if they would like them as virtual partners.

This concludes my testimony and I'm standing by for any questions you may have. Thank you.