



**Testimony of the Island Institute in Support of LD 1484, An Act to Enhance the
ConnectMaine Authority's Capacity to Provide World-class Internet
April 27th, 2021**

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and members of the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee, my name is Nick Battista, and I am offering this testimony on behalf of the Island Institute in support of the ideas and goals motivating LD 1484. The Island Institute is a member of the Maine Broadband Coalition, and I also serve as the Chair of the ConnectMaine Authority.

The Island Institute is a 38-year-old nonprofit organization based in Rockland, Maine. We work to sustain Maine's island and coastal communities and are committed to a just, resilient, and vibrant future for the coast of Maine. We work in partnership with courageous leaders to support resilient communities and confront a changing world.

The Island Institute's community development work focuses on: the marine economy, climate and energy pilots, small business, education, and leadership. Broadband is foundational to all of this work, and all Mainers need to have the ability to use high-speed reliable internet.

The Island Institute fully supports a strong, robust, and active statewide broadband authority. Both a strong Authority and robust funding for broadband infrastructure have been organizational priorities. These two priorities are closely linked. The right combination of institutional structures, capacity, and political support will help enable us solve our state's broadband challenges. Significant funding is needed as well. Robust, dedicated, consistent, revenue streams can help the State develop more sophisticated partnerships with the private sector and expand the availability of publicly-owned infrastructure.

As the Committee considers this proposal, please keep the following in mind:

- Appointments to the Board, should be subject to the confirmation process, given the responsibilities vested in them.
- The relationship between the Board and President should be clearly established, and the President should be responsive to the Board. The President's appointment should also be subject to a reasonable renewal period of two years.
- Clearly articulating the powers of the Authority, rather than forcing the Authority to rely on implied powers, allows certain activities such as providing financing, incurring indebtedness, and making equity investments to be more easily undertaken.
- A clear transition plan helps minimize confusion and uncertainty at this critical juncture.

Broadband is fundamentally placed-based infrastructure and as such, flexibility and nimbleness in structure help the Authority achieve its goals. The greater the restrictions and limitations on the Authority, the less likely it is to be successful. LD 1484 has significant potential for the State.