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**April 27, 2021**

**Testimony of Rep. Seth Berry  
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology  
Presenting L.D. 1432, "An Act To Update the Municipal Gigabit  
Broadband Network Access Fund"**

Senator Lawrence and fellow members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee, my name is Seth Berry and I represent House District 55: Bowdoin, Bowdoinham, most of Richmond and beautiful Swan Island on the Kennebec. I'm pleased to present L.D. 1432, "An Act To Update the Municipal Gigabit Broadband Network Access Fund."

This bill amends the Municipal Gigabit Broadband Network Access Fund, which is a fund administered by the ConnectMaine Authority to address the need in Maine to access ultra high-speed broadband infrastructure through the provision of grants to communities, regional partnerships and municipalities to support a municipal gigabit fiber-optic broadband network.

When created by this committee in 2015, the fund was intended to help create Maine "magnet" communities with ultra-high speed internet, helping attract the best and most talented digital entrepreneurs and innovators to our state. However, lack of funding and capitalization has so far prevented this fund from realizing its potential.

This bill makes the following changes to the fund, with the purpose of making the fund more flexible to administer and more useful to communities wishing to invest significant resources of their own in their future.

1. It limits the grants to a municipality or group of municipalities;
2. It provides definitions of "gigabit fiber-optic network," "symmetrical high-speed Internet" and "open-access network" and requires the authority, beginning in 2025, to establish minimum upload and download speeds for a symmetrical high-speed Internet at least equal to the minimum upload and download speeds available to a majority of urban census blocks in the United States;
3. It removes the cap on the amount of the grant, but limits the amount of ConnectMaine funds that may be used to 50% of the total cost of a project;

4. It maintains the requirement that a municipality provide at least a 25% cash match but provides that the cash match may not consist of funds from a source other than the municipality; and
5. It removes specific reporting requirements for applicants, instead requiring them to meet application requirements established by the authority.

In closing: please note that this bill would not capitalize the fund, and would cost Maine nothing. It is only a bill to make the Fund more flexible, more nimble, and more capable of helping us to skate where the high-speed internet puck is going.

Thank you for listening. I would be happy to answer any questions.