



Testimony of Maine Broadband Coalition  
in Support of LD 1484

April 27, 2021

Greetings Senator Lawrence and Rep. Berry and members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology committee. My name is Andrew Butcher, and this testimony is on behalf of the Maine Broadband Coalition – your partner in creating solutions for Broadband policy and programming - to testify in **support of LD 1484, An Act To Enhance the ConnectMaine Authority's Capacity To Provide World-class Internet.**

The Maine Broadband Coalition (The Coalition) is a statewide network of over 2200 stakeholders working to advance the policy, resources, and infrastructure necessary to enable affordable, reliable, and future oriented high-speed internet for all. The Coalition is guided through a 30-member Advisory Committee representing a range geographies, industries, sectors, and issues including Internet Service Providers, community-based organizations, non-profits, governmental agencies and private technology companies.

If we keep doing things the way they have always been done – we'll never get to where we want to go. The last year has exposed a need for a transformation in how our society functions be it remote working, distance learning, ecommerce or telehealth care. The State's role enabling equitable access, affordable pricing and a high performing reliable, world class broadband infrastructure is more important than ever and LD 1484 boldly codifies that role, building from the strengths of the existing Connect Maine Authority.

In 2021 we need to make sure that no one is without the ability to access the internet. We also need to make sure that we use the resources afforded through the American Rescue Plan Act to make the most of not just our recovery but of transformation for future prosperity. The Authority proposed in this bill affords the appropriate and necessary capacity and ability to proactively distribute funding, leverage resources, provide oversight to existing investments, and make the most of long-term investments towards the public benefit.

We should all be concerned about how we will sustain, maintain and oversee the public infrastructure. This bill not only enables the Authority to generate funding for proactive investments, necessary maintenance and operations but also accountability to manage the investments that are central to the public-private partnerships necessary to provide high-speed internet in all communities.

Strong statutory authority combined with funding will enable the necessary structure and capacity to achieve the State's broadband goals and beyond. 2021 is not the year to act timidly around broadband in Maine. The Broadband Coalition looks forward to being an active partner in defining and distilling the roles and function of a more robust, nimble, and enhanced Authority.

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