

Testimony on LD 1484
"An Act to Enhance the ConnectMaine Authority's Capacity to Provide World-class Internet"
U.S. Cellular
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April 30, 2021

On behalf of UScellular, I'm providing this testimony neither for nor against LD 1484, specifically Governor Mills' amendment to ensure the entire State of Maine has access to high quality broadband, including fixed wireless and mobile broadband. We are pleased that the framework of the Maine Connectivity Authority recognizes the value and necessity of wireless broadband.

UScellular is a major wireless provider in Maine with a strong rural focus. We serve some of the more rural areas of the state, where others do not. However, more work needs to be done to bridge the digital divide and bring mobile broadband to unserved and underserved Maine residents. We welcome the ability to participate and help shape these efforts.

High quality mobility services are essential for full participation in today's digital society. Rural residents deserve the same level of services, prices, competition and choices for both fixed and mobile broadband. This is not an either/or decision. Now is the time to address rural broadband from both wireline and wireless perspectives. Fiber, alone, cannot close the digital divide.

The pandemic has shown us how important wireless broadband is in keeping us all connected. From mobile hot spots for remote learning, telehealth, public safety, smart agriculture and fixed wifi, wireless has allowed broadband access in remote areas and where wireline simply cannot.

Wireless broadband is a very cost effective and expedient technology to deploy to rural areas. Infrastructure covers more than just specific households or businesses and allows for mobility.

In summary, mobile broadband connectivity is crucial to all of Maine. Rural Maine should enjoy the same accessibility and benefits of broadband, including fixed wireless and mobile broadband, as the urban areas of the state. On behalf of UScellular, I welcome the opportunity to help shape Maine policy in closing the digital divide in all of Maine.