

**Testimony of the National Digital Equity Center in Support of LD 1555, “An Act to Fund  
Broadband Internet Infrastructure for Marginalized Groups in the State”  
April 27th, 2021**

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and members of the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee, my name is Susan Corbett, and I am offering this testimony on behalf of the National Digital Equity Center in support of LD 1555. I also serve as a board member of the ConnectMaine Authority, serve on the Maine Broadband Coalition Advisory Council, and was the Co-Chair of Governor Mill’s Economic Recovery Committee’s Infrastructure sub-committee. I am the former CEO of Axiom Technologies, a last-mile broadband provider located in Washington County.

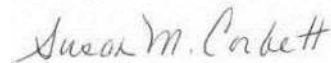
The National Digital Equity Center was founded in 2018 with a mission to close the digital divide in Maine and across the United States. We are proponents of digital equity for all Maine citizens. Digital equity is necessary for civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to services. We achieve digital equity by promoting digital inclusion which includes affordable broadband, affordable equipment, digital literacy and public computer access.

LD 1555 would appropriate funds to the ConnectMaine Authority for the provision of broadband Internet infrastructure to benefit marginalized groups, including historically disadvantaged racial, indigenous and tribal communities, individuals who were formerly incarcerated or are unhoused, individuals in substance use disorder recovery and low-income individuals.

Connecting all unserved and underserved homes with robust broadband connectivity is essential to achieve digital equity for all Maine citizens. It is critically important to ensure that the homes that have a lower per capital family income have access to the same broadband connectivity to homes that have a higher per capita family income.

Equally important is addressing affordability, and ensuring that as we build out broadband networks across our great state, that we do not make the digital divide wider by leaving our most vulnerable citizens behind.

Sincerely,



Susan Corbett, Director  
National Digital Equity Center