



JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC
AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



HEATHER JOHNSON
COMMISSIONER

**Testimony Of: Kate Foye
For LD 1555**

An Act To Fund Broadband Internet Infrastructure for Marginalized Groups in the State

April 27, 2021

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry and members of the EUT Committee, my name is Kate Foye and I am the Legislative Liaison for the Department of Economic and Community Development. I am submitting written testimony on LD 1555.

Yesterday Governor Mills, along with Commissioner Johnson, Senator Bennett, and Representative Berry unveiled legislation to establish the Maine Connectivity Authority, a new entity charged with achieving universal availability of high-speed broadband in Maine.

The Governor's Economic Recovery Committee (ERC), charged with charting Maine's economic recovery after the pandemic, urged the State to prioritize investment in affordable, high-speed broadband statewide to increase access to distance education, remote work, and telemedicine. Specially, the ERC recommended convening public, private, and philanthropic stakeholders to map, prioritize, and complete program design for universal broadband in anticipation of new funding and advancing digital equity and inclusion by increasing access to broadband, computers, mobile devices, and expanded digital literacy training for historically underserved individuals and communities.

The Authority will pursue these goals. More specifically, under the legislation, the Authority is charged with ensuring:

- that effective, accessible connectivity be universally available in the state;
- that there be secure, affordable, reliable, competitive and sustainable forward-looking infrastructure that can meet future needs;
- and that all residents, businesses and institutions in Maine be able to take full advantage of the economic, health, educational, and other opportunities available through connectivity services.

While the Maine Connectivity Authority has just launched, the Administration recognizes that the work of expansion does not just include infrastructure, but also affordability and digital inclusion. We appreciate the Legislation the has been submitted by Representative Talbott-Ross and we know that this is a complex and important issue. While we support the work that this bill is asking the department



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to do, we hope to work with the sponsor to build in a process to understand how this effort can fit into the larger Broadband expansion efforts.

Thank you