



Maine Municipal
Association

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Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

Neither For Nor Against

*LD 1484 – An Act To Enhance the ConnectMaine Authority’s Capacity to Provide World-class
Internet*

April 27, 2021

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry and members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee, my name is Neal Goldberg, and I am providing testimony neither for nor against LD 1484 on behalf of MMA’s Legislative Policy Committee.

This bill represents a large expansion of autonomy for the ConnectMaine Authority that members are not wholly opposed to as long as there is consideration for the municipal interests that it serves. Currently, municipal officials are satisfied with the leadership and direction of the authority’s seven board members and there is a risk that municipal representation diminishes under LD 1484 since it does not expressly include municipal voices on ConnectMaine’s newly formed Board of Directors.

The transition of ConnectMaine from an instrument of the state government to a separate entity at arm’s length is also an indication that broadband planning and infrastructure projects might be in the hands of local government and without state support in the future. As it exists today, the ConnectMaine Authority has state resources and capacity at its disposal. By giving the authority distance and autonomy from the state, the state is shedding its responsibility to participate in achieving Maine’s broadband related priorities and asking municipalities to take the wheel in determining where and how to invest in broadband infrastructure.

As this committee has heard before, upgrading broadband infrastructure is tantamount to economic development since access to reliable broadband is a prerequisite for new businesses and residents locating or expanding in Maine. LD 1484, therefore, also needs to be considered for its benefit to economic development in Maine. The committee needs to parse out what parts of this bill advance Maine’s economy and broadband infrastructure and what parts are merely an avenue for the state to step back from these activities.

Thank you for your time and consideration on these important matters.