

**Testimony in Support of LD 1949**  
**“An Act To Amend the Caribou Utilities District Charter To Include Broadband Services”**  
**Presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology**  
February 15, 2022

Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, & Technology my name is Hugh A. Kirkpatrick. I am the General Manager of Caribou Utilities District. I'm here today to testify in support of LD 1949.

Over 1,300 miles of dark fiber optic cable was constructed throughout Maine over 10 years ago. It travels through Caribou, however, since then, there is limited access for any customers to connect to this for high-speed broadband service. Private telecom companies in the region have not demonstrated an interest in expanding this infrastructure.

Following the [ConnectMaine](#) Community Broadband Planning Support Program for Broadband Utility Districts and using the Downeast Broadband Utility (DBU) in Washington County as an example; we want to leverage the quasi-municipal attributes, management, financial, operational and technical expertise of the Caribou Utilities District (CUD) to provide fiber broadband access to any and all entities throughout the City. The CUD is committed to a network which will provide symmetrical service available *at a minimum of 100 (Mega-bits/sec)* with options for 10 *(Giga-bits/sec)* speeds in the future.

Identical to the DBU; the CUD would construct, own and operate a fiber optic network throughout the entire 6x12 mile township. Internet Service Providers (ISPs) would install fiber between customer dwellings (FTTH) and the CUD's network. For every connection to the CUD's network, each ISP would pay a \$25 /month /customer subscription fee to the CUD (See Exhibit 1). This arrangement is a public-private partnership between the CUD and any ISP that wants to sell telecom consumer services in Caribou.

The CUD's advantages are numerous: over 75 years of financial stability, existing administrative overhead in place, no additional District employees are required, use existing vendor relationships, the ability to borrow at low rates, potential to qualify for many Federal, State and County grants, only the customers who choose the service pay for it (no taxes, tariffs, or TIFs required), and success complements other Districts divisions as well as all other community stakeholders.

Additionally, the CUD has always operated financially monolithic divisions where one cannot subsidize the other and vice versa. Our annual audits will confirm this. Further, the CUD cannot hold captive customers hostage by requiring, for example, water customers subscribe to broadband service. This could only be accomplished under threat of water service termination which is not allowed by the PUC. Moreover, sewer customers cannot be compelled under threat of service termination under any circumstances for obvious sanitary reasons. The CUD open network public-private partnership arrangement offers every customer two options: keep the service you have or switch to *a minimum of 100 (Mega-bits/sec)*, up & down, from any ISP that wants sell telecom consumer services in Caribou.

If the 130<sup>th</sup> Maine Legislature approves LD 1949, they will be fulfilling the charge of the [ConnectMaine](#) Authority for a community which has chosen this operational structure in order to expand broadband service availability throughout the City of Caribou and possibly the region.

Thank you

*Hugh A. Kirkpatrick*

Hugh A. Kirkpatrick, Caribou Utilities District General Manager