

# LD 1, An Act to Increase Storm Preparedness for Maine's Communities, Homes and Infrastructure

## Testimony in favor



Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development,

My name is Andrew Butcher, and I serve as President of the [Maine Connectivity Authority](#) (MCA). As you know MCA is Maine's agency to plan, develop, invest in, and sustain Maine's connectivity efforts. Today, I testify in support of LD 1, *An Act to Increase Storm Preparedness for Maine's Communities, Homes and Infrastructure*.

The work of the State of Maine Infrastructure Rebuilding and Resilience Commission (IRRC) has identified data driven best practices that will enable Maine people, communities, and businesses to both respond to and prepare for disasters. Many of these recommendations center around improvements to communication and capacity. We have closely followed the work of the IRRC and are grateful for the acknowledgement of the pivotal role of connectivity and digital equity in the resilience conversation.

MCA enthusiastically supports LD 1. In 2025, MCA is planned to facilitate over \$350M of public and private funding to ensure high speed internet service is available to the ~27,000 households and businesses in Maine that are without adequate internet service. Funds will be used to build the physical infrastructure that will connect the last mile with high speed internet as well as establish a new network that expands Maine's wireless and cellular capabilities so critical to disaster management. These investments are bolstered by funding to support the people most impacted by the digital divide to be able to fully participate in a digital society through technical assistance, affordable devices, and skill development.

Infrastructure and digital equity are critical path issues for successful implementation of both the IRRC's recommendations and LD 1. Middle mile, last mile, wireless, satellite, and cellular connectivity all play substantial roles in creating a more resilient Maine, especially as artificial intelligence and the "internet of things" become more integrated into all facets of infrastructure. Strong telecommunications infrastructure ensures rapid and effective communication during disasters, improving coordination among responders and the public. Enhanced infrastructure with a digital equity orientation will ensure all Maine people can participate in and benefit from resiliency efforts including alerts and the collection of real-time data input from remote or low-infrastructure areas, especially when a disaster has impacted communication systems or limited access to parts of the state.

Improved connectivity creates a more complete picture of the state's resilience needs and capacities, and helps deliver on solutions to address both challenges and opportunities. Smart grid technologies and microgrids, are dependent upon reliable, redundant, and robust telecommunications for the monitoring and management of energy distribution, load management, and outage mitigation. helping to reduce outages. During disaster events and outages, digital platforms enhance communication strategies to provide real-time information to affected populations about resources, emergency services, and recovery plans, helping to mitigate the impact on vulnerable communities.



## LD 1, An Act to Increase Storm Preparedness for Maine's Communities, Homes and Infrastructure

### Testimony in favor



MCA's digital equity work is critical to the state's resilience work as well, as it ensures that all community members can access resources and information for maintaining and protecting vital infrastructure, resiliency, preparedness, alerts, and recovery efforts. Digital equity work improves reach for resiliency engagement, and increases the likelihood that outcomes are equitable, broadly supported, and meet local needs, especially for our most vulnerable populations. Connected communities who have familiarity and comfort using data will endure an extreme weather event with less damage and a faster recovery.

A central theme of the IIRC work is that capacity and coordination are necessary for success. LD 1 appropriately elevates the role and resources of the Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) in this work. MCA looks forward to even greater collaboration with MEMA to support IIRC recommendations and best practices. Updating MEMA's communications technology and warning systems and providing training and education will improve prevention, mitigation, and response to disasters across Maine. Interoperability and interconnectivity are central pillars of these updates and improvements. MCA stands ready to assist with this important work.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on LD 1. We appreciate your judicious consideration and urge your support. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Butcher'.

Andrew Butcher  
President, Maine Connectivity Authority  
Email: [abutcher@maineconnectivity.org](mailto:abutcher@maineconnectivity.org)  
Phone: (207) 209-3868