



February 2, 2022

Maine Connectivity Authority Testimony Neither For Nor Against LD 1894 "*An Act To Support Municipal Broadband Infrastructure through Incentives and Competition*"

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Greetings Senator Lawrence and Representative Berry and Members of the Joint Standing Committee for Energy Utilities and Technology,

My name is Andrew Butcher, and I serve as President of the Maine Connectivity Authority and am here today to testify neither for nor against LD 1894. As you know the Maine Connectivity Authority is a new agency charged with planning, developing, investing, deploying and managing comprehensive broadband solutions to ensure universal access, adoption and affordability for all Mainers. There is exciting progress to share relevant to the Connectivity Authority outlined in our January 15th report to this committee and will be elaborated further in a hearing later this month.

While there are many intriguing concepts within LD 1894 in line with the State's connectivity goals - namely seeking to incentivize and support locally driven broadband efforts through the capitalization of the Municipal Gigabyte Fund or encourage regional broadband utility districts questions remain. Questions such as where and how funding will be allocated to the fund and the implications for integrating advanced communications technologies with electric and/or water utilities are worthy of further research.

For these reasons, we believe it will be helpful to better understand if delivery of retail or wholesale broadband service would overburden existing utility easements held by electrical or water utilities and if so what statutory adjustments are needed to enable the intent of the bill. Such an evaluation could provide a framework to ensure investments maximize alignment with existing utility requirements and infrastructure.

This bill is helpful in revealing that there are more questions than answers at this point and we are happy to help contribute to more insight and information in the next year. Continued gratitude to Sen. Vitelli for her leadership and willingness to continue finding new ways to support and sustain Maine's broadband infrastructure needs.

Yours in Service,

Andrew Butcher