



Testimony of Maine Broadband Coalition  
in support of LD 221: 2022-2023 BIENNIAL BUDGET Part AA

February 24, 2021

Greetings Senator Breen and Representative Pierce and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

My name is Andrew Butcher, I serve as Director of Innovation and Resilience for the Greater Portland Council of Governments and I am here on behalf of the Maine Broadband Coalition – your partner in creating solutions for Broadband policy and programming in Maine.

The Maine Broadband Coalition is a statewide network of 1900 stakeholders working to advance the policy, resources, and infrastructure necessary to enable affordable, reliable, and future oriented high-speed internet for all communities. The Coalition is guided through a 30-member Advisory Committee representing a range geographies, industries, sectors, and issues as high-speed internet is foundational to Maine’s economic, social, and environmental prosperity more than ever. A few core members include: The Island Institute, AARP Maine, Tilson Technologies, Presque Isle Economic Development, CEI, Maine Farmland Trust, Northern Forest Center, OTELCO, Community Concepts Finance Corporation, GWI, Educate Maine, Network Maine, GrowSmart Maine, The National Digital Equity Center and GPCOG.

We are proud to have helped mobilize 75% of the electorate (276,000 voters) this last July in approving Maine’s first broadband bond. As many of you know are currently hosting Maine Speed testing Initiative in partnership with Connect Maine to identify where there is internet service, who provides and how it performs. This real-time data will help inform how resources can have maximum impact.

My testimony today is to provide support of Part AA of the Biennial Budget, which clarifies a funding mechanism for Connect Maine by correcting an error in the drafting of Part SSSS of the budget. Affordable, reliable, and resilient high-speed internet is an essential service for all Mainers today and into the future. Connect Maine is where the rubber meets the road for the State in enabling the resources and oversight of infrastructure that is central to our ability to work remotely, visit with health care professionals, learn out of the classroom, make our communities livable, and even attend to civic responsibility as we are today virtually meeting across the State.

It is appropriate to include cell phones in the mix of funding because these essential tools also require broadband infrastructure to function. This bill adapts a current funding stream that currently includes other beneficiaries of internet infrastructure and as such, should move forward as part of the biennial budget.

Andrew Butcher,  
Maine Broadband Coalition  
[Connect@MaineBroadbandCoalition.org](mailto:Connect@MaineBroadbandCoalition.org)