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Good afternoon Senator Woodsome, Representative Berry and members of the Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology,

My name is Amy Gallant and I am the Advocacy Director for AARP in Maine, representing more than 230,000 members 50+ statewide. AARP is a non-profit, non-partisan member organization representing the interests of 50+ Mainers and their families.

AARP Maine supports LD 256, An Act to Ensure Continued Availability of High-Speed Internet at Maine's Schools and Libraries.

Libraries are a critical part of our members' networks. According to the PEW Research Center, nearly half of 50-64 year-olds utilize their local library (51% in 2012, 42% in 2015) and over a third of 65+ utilize their local library (40% in 2012, 34% in 2015).ⁱ It is also worth noting that those with lower incomes are more likely to utilize the local library, particularly for an internet-connected computer.

According to the Maine Public Library Statistics, there were 1,927 computers with internet connection for use by the general public at Maine's 277 libraries across the state in 2015.ⁱⁱ Older Mainers utilize Maine's public libraries and their computers to connect with friends and family, searching for employment and volunteer opportunities and to access online resources. Many of Maine's seniors live in unserved and underserved broadband areas. Public libraries and the broadband connectivity at these libraries provide free broadband with the comfort of library staff available for assistance as needed. The American Library Association provides a plethora of information and guidance for local libraries to better serve older adults, and broadband access is always top of the list.ⁱⁱⁱ The National Broadband Plan calls for greater library capacity in terms of internet connectivity to better serve older adults.^{iv}

AARP looks forward to the discussion generated by LD 256, which changes the limit on the amount collected on prepaid wireless telecommunications service from a percentage to a flat amount, to ensure the continued availability of internet at Maine's libraries.

Thank you for your time today.

(over)

On behalf of AARP Maine,

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ⁱ http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/09/15/libraries-at-the-crossroads/2015-09-15_libraries_1-02-2/

ⁱⁱ <http://www.countingopinions.com/pireports/report.php?5d55363f4f7f856753d9d95e7cb98314>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.ala.org/rusa/resources/guidelines/libraryservices>

^{iv} http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/research/public_policy_institute/cons_prot/2013/connection-for-all-ages-insight-AARP-ppi-cons-prot.pdf