



MAINE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

49 Community Drive, Augusta, ME 04330
Telephone: (207) 622-3473 Fax: (207) 626-2968
Website: www.msmaweb.com

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

L.D. 256

AN ACT TO ENSURE CONTINUED AVAILABILITY OF HIGH-SPEED BROADBAND INTERNET AT MAINE'S SCHOOLS AND LIBRARIES

Senator Woodsome, Representative Berry and members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee. I am Victoria Wallack, Communications and Governmental Relations Director for Maine School Management Association, and am here to testify on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and Maine Schools Superintendents Association in support of L.D. 256.

Based on the latest count there are 661 schools served by the Maine School and Library Network, which provides broadband internet access, email, web hosting and other related services. We are part of a consortium that also includes Maine's public libraries.

The services are largely paid for through telecommunications surcharges under the Federal E-Rate program and Maine Telecommunications Education Access Fund, supplemented by a \$1 per student fee that was recently added.

Broadband internet access is critical for public schools, not just for our one-to-one laptop programs, but for everything we do. Purchasing internet service through the consortium has made it more affordable, but, as you know, available subsidy funds are affected by how many people are using the services on which the E-Rate surcharges are applied.

This bill is designed to make that funding stream more reliable and robust. We support this change and hope it will stabilize the fund and keep the Maine School and Library Network affordable for all its current public school and library users. The \$1 per student charge to Maine public schools was done through a regulatory decision and not through the Legislature, as we understand it. Our concern is that if funding isn't stabilized there will be additional charges to school users and that cost will have to be passed onto property taxpayers.