

## **Support for LD-256 from Cherryfield Public Library/Cherryfield Elementary School**

Presented by Cara E. Sawyer- Cherryfield Public Library, Co-Director and Cherryfield Elementary School Librarian

Good afternoon. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak. My name is Cara Sawyer and I am in a unique position. I am the Co-Director of a Public Library as well as the Librarian at a rural Elementary School. Today, I am going to focus on the need for this bill from the view point of the school.

I would like you to imagine yourselves as a teacher in Rural Maine; a place where infrastructure is not strong, or in some cases, non-existent. A place where, unless you have access to a school or library you may not have the ability to get the internet; especially not High Speed Broadband. Now, imagine that the funding for MSLN's internet service is gone and you no longer have internet connection. You have a curriculum to teach which is partially based on using internet resources. You have software to use which needs access to "The Cloud." You have students who are looking to you to teach them the skills they need...but you can't teach them because you have no connectivity. Your class has been provided with devices for the students to use to learn together in class or to use for homework; however, without internet access, all you have are expensive word processors or gaming stations. You have so much you are supposed to be teaching these children to help them succeed but your hands are tied by not having one of the most important resources you need. Are you supposed to re-write the curriculum? Are you expected to purchase extra materials to cover what you could normally get from the internet? How, exactly, are you going to teach your students to succeed in the Age of the Internet when you have no Internet?

Now, put yourself in the place of the student. You've been given a device to use. You don't have internet at home because it is either too expensive or not available where you live. You're supposed to get your homework online. You need the internet to do research. Even if you could get on the Internet, neither your teacher nor your librarian have been able to teach you how to use it properly because they haven't been able to get online to show you. You have no access to MARVEL! or any other vetted database. (At the Cherryfield Public Library we even ran into a situation where WiFi Hotspots were provided for children to do their school work and the hotspots didn't work because the infrastructure for cell signals was poor or unavailable.) You know you are going to be unable to complete your work. You'll fall behind in class through no fault of your own. It's simply because you didn't have the ability to use the Internet because there was nowhere you could go that provided access for you. This is the reality if LD-256 is not passed.

As the Librarian for the school, I am using the Internet connection to completely catalog the school's library for the first time. Students and teachers will be able to go online to find materials they need for their classes. We will be able to easily check items in and out and keep accurate records. This will make it much more efficient in the future and far easier for the school.

With all of this in mind, I ask you to please support LD-256. If rural areas in Maine lose the School and Library Network Internet access it would force them to go from the walking proudly into the future to trudging sadly into the past.

Thank you for your time and consideration.