



STATE OF MAINE  
CONNECTME AUTHORITY  
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**TESTIMONY of Richard Thompson  
Chief Information Officer, University of Maine System  
Chair, Connect Maine Authority**

***LD 256 – An Act to Ensure Continued Availability of High-speed Broadband Internet at Maine's  
Schools and Libraries***

**COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, UTILITIES AND TECHNOLOGY  
February 14, 2017**

Senator Woodsome, Representative Berry, and distinguished members of the Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, my name is Richard Thompson and I am testifying today neither for nor against LD 256, An Act to Ensure Continued Availability of High-speed Broadband Internet at Maine's Schools and Libraries.

I serve as the Chief Information Officer of the University of Maine System and as the current chairperson of the ConnectME Authority. On behalf of both organizations, I offer information to consider as you work this bill.

The Maine School and Library Network (MSLN) is a significant infrastructure tool provided to schools and libraries. The collaborative formed by the MDOE, Maine State Library, Office of Information Technology and the University is known as Networkmaine. The collaborative has provided expertise, coordination, administrative and operational support to schools and libraries for many years.

The funding through the MTEAF has decreased for several years, as you have heard from others. The collaborative has responded by reducing costs where possible, all the while focused on providing high-speed access to almost every location. This is important, given the goal to maintain equity amongst the large, small and midsize, essentially all schools and libraries.

A more stable funding source that will generate a sufficient amount to sustain this level of service is needed to avoid the "participation fees" that are in place today. A small rural school or library might not be able to fund any fee directly, disadvantaging their students and patrons.

During the development of the ConnectME Authority strategic plan, I heard often that users, most from rural communities, used their library to perform work and research functions. It was clear to me this is very valuable to our citizens.

It is also important to look at the current source of funds and the impact on our telecommunications providers' customers. The providers report that the current assessment strategy should be changed to equitably spread the cost over all users, lowering the burden on the subset of customers who are assessed today.

To that end, several of us have met to discuss possible amendments to stabilize the funding, engage stockholders in developing an equitable distribution of the assessment and to assure a consistent, and appropriate cap on the MSLN funding.

There is commitment to continue these conversations and to participate at your work session to that end. I thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions.

**Richard Thompson**  
**Chief Information Officer, University of Maine System**  
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