

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

September 22, 2021

The Honorable Evelyn Remaley
Acting Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information
Acting Administrator
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
1401 Constitution Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Assistant Secretary Remaley:

We write in support of the application submitted by the ConnectMaine Authority to the National Telecommunications Information Administration (NTIA) Broadband Infrastructure Grant Program. ConnectMaine seeks \$28 million to build out broadband infrastructure in rural Maine, connecting households to critical services and advancing the competitiveness of rural communities.

Established by the Maine State Legislature in 2016, the ConnectMaine Authority is the state entity tasked with expanding broadband internet access to all Maine homes and businesses. In pursuit of this mission, ConnectMaine works with public and private partners across the state. Since its inception, the partnership-based community broadband planning program has helped over 200 communities work to expand broadband access. ConnectMaine has a proven track record of managing public funds in concert with private investment to support the increasing broadband needs of the Maine people.

As one of the most rural states in the United States, Maine has unique challenges in providing high-speed broadband access to all citizens. In fact, according to state estimates, up to 83,000 households, almost 15 percent of the state, lack high-speed internet access. Another study found that up to 12,000 Maine households do not have any form of broadband connection. The lack of broadband reliability that plagues rural Mainers restricts their ability to compete in a 21st century economy and to utilize critical educational, health, and other public services. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the need for broadband connectivity, as school, work, health care, and connecting with friends and family all increasingly moved online.

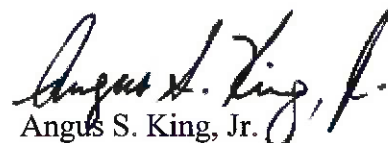
This project aims to deliver high-speed broadband connectivity to 24 Maine communities and nearly 15,000 residents. Specifically, ConnectMaine and its partners will construct infrastructure for broadband in some of the most rural unserved areas in the state. By expanding broadband access, rural Maine communities will be able to utilize a variety of resources and services that will make these communities a more viable place to live, work, and raise a family.

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Thank you for your time and effort on behalf of the ConnectMaine Authority. We urge your careful consideration of its proposal, in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations, and ask that you notify us directly or have your staff notify Trevor Hustus (Collins) at (202) 224-2523, Adam Lachman (King) at (202) 224-5344, Corrinne Latti (Pingree) at (207) 774-5019, and Barbara Hayslett (Golden) at (207) 492-6009 when a final decision has been made.

Sincerely,


Susan M. Collins
United States Senator


Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator


Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress


Jared F. Golden
Member of Congress