

Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology  
c/o Jordan Merrifield Legislative Information Office  
Cross Building, Room 211  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: LD 848: *An Act To Increase High-speed Internet In Rural Maine*  
LD 933: *An Act To Facilitate the Expansion of Broadband to Unserved Areas of the State*  
LD 1107: *An Act To Create Needed Broadband Infrastructure in Rural Maine through the Establishment of a Satellite-based Broadband Grant Program*

Dear Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and other members of the Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology,

We represent NASW Maine, the professional organization that advocates for the over 5,000 licensed social workers and their clients in the state of Maine. We are here to urge you to support the above mentioned bills and the work of Representative Collamore, Representative Berry, and Senator Stewart to help develop a world-class high speed internet network for Maine. We believe that the state plays an incredible role in our state investment in universal, affordable connectivity to address the digital divide and ensure Maine's economic future.

Just like universal electrification of the 1950's, universal connectivity to the internet will address inequities and build a strong future for all communities and persons in Maine. During the past year, we have experienced an unprecedented increase in telehealth, work from home and on-line learning, which has magnified the imperfections in our internet connectivity. A Mission Broadband survey in August, 2020 indicated that 47% of Maine respondents believe that their internet needs were not being met (Portland Press Herald). This is unacceptable for the health, education and employment opportunities for all Mainers. We do not want to lose students, businesses and our young adults because of poor quality or lack of access to high speed internet.

NASW Maine believes that Maine needs multiple financial streams and intense community collaboration on this issue to address these inequities in access, affordability, knowledge and skills. Monies and collaboration between the federal government, state government, internet service providers and communities are needed to support a world-class internet.

We urge you to support LD 848, 933, and 1107.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie M. Schirmer, LCSW  
Policy Committee Co-Chair, NASW Maine  
Vice-Chair, NASW Maine Board of Directors

Tiarra LaPierre  
Policy Committee Member



Recent survey shows disparities in broadband access in Maine. Portland Press Herald. August 17, 2020.  
<https://www.pressherald.com/2020/08/17/survey-finds-widespread-dissatisfaction-with-internet-service-in-maine/> Accessed 4.1.21.