



Health and Human Services Committee  
c/o Kerri Withee, Legislative Office  
Cross Building, Room 214  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: LD 1148: *Resolve, To Increase Broadband Access in Private Nonmedical Institutions*

Dear Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and other members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

We represent NASW Maine, the professional organization that advocate for the 5,000 licensed social workers in Maine and their clients. We write in support of Representative McCreight's bill to increase broadband access in private nonmedical institutions. We believe that persons living in residential care or assisted living need access and equipment necessary to meet their educational, medical, work and recreational needs. This bill requires DHHS to collaborate with nonmedical institutions to strategize and develop a plan to meet these needs.

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 indicates 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.

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 1148.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Tiarra LaPierre  
Member, Policy Committee, NASW ME



## NASW Maine

Reference: page 2

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.