



*State of Maine*  
*Office of the Public Advocate*  
112 State House Station, Augusta, Maine 04333-0112  
(207) 624-3687 (voice) 711 (TTY) [www.Maine.gov/meopa](http://www.Maine.gov/meopa)

Janet T. Mills  
GOVERNOR

Barry J. Hobbins  
PUBLIC ADVOCATE

February 5, 2019

Chairman Lawrence, Chairman Berry and Members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee,

The Office of the Public Advocate (“OPA”) testifies in support of LD 147 “An Act To Extend Internet Availability in Rural Maine” which provides one-time funding for 2 years for a program that provides mobile hot spot devices to libraries in Washington County.

LD 147 would provide funding from the General Fund for a 2-year period, \$50,000.00 in 2019-2020 and \$50,000.00 in 2020-2021 in order to restart a prior program that provided mobile hot spots for libraries in Washington County. These libraries are located in areas such as Jonesport and Cherryfield among others.

The original funding for this program was by a foundation which funding unfortunately ran out two years ago. This program will provide students and other residents in the Downeast area access to the internet which they otherwise would not have.

The OPA is very supportive of efforts to expand broadband throughout rural and the hard-to-reach areas of Maine. This is funding for communities that are not connected and by providing funding for mobile hotspots will help bridge the gap.

Thank you for your time, attention and consideration of this testimony. The Office of the Public Advocate looks forward to working with the Committee on LD

147, and will be present at the work session to assist the Committee in its consideration of this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Barry J. Hobbins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "B".

Barry J. Hobbins  
Public Advocate