

Testimony of GrowSmart Maine in support of LD 221: 2022-2023
BIENNIAL BUDGET Part AA

2021

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February 24, 2021

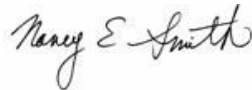
Senator Breen, Representative Pierce, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, my name is Nancy Smith and I am the Executive Director of GrowSmart Maine. We are a statewide non-partisan organization working to create lasting prosperity without sacrificing the quality of life that defines Maine.

We support policies, programs and projects that define and protect the value of our unique built and natural places while supporting long term economic opportunity. It is with this intention that we have been actively engaged in the Maine Broadband Coalition since its inception and are advocates for strategic funding and sound policy to support affordable, high speed internet.

Today, we speak in support of Part AA of the Biennial Budget, which corrects an error in Part SSSS of original budget language and affirms the original intent to temporarily move funding from e-911 to ConnectMaine for both landlines and cell phones. This language corrects that drafting error.

Affordable high-speed internet is an essential service, comparable to electricity when it comes to daily purposes from remote learning to health and wellness to the ability to work and conduct business. ConnectMaine is our state's central convener and funding to achieve universal availability of broadband to all Maine households and businesses and as such, must be adequately funded. It is appropriate to include cell phones in the mix of funding because these essential tools also require broadband infrastructure to function. This bill adapts a current funding stream that currently includes other beneficiaries of internet infrastructure and as such, should move forward as part of the biennial budget.

Best,



Nancy E Smith
Executive Director