

**Chair:** Dick Thompson

**Authority Members:** Denise Garland - Susan Woods - Bruce Williamson - Jon Richard - Ralph Johnson

January 31, 2019

**Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry and members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee**

My name is Heather Johnson, the Director of the ConnectME Authority and I am testifying in support of LD 31 “An Act Regarding Rules Adopted by the ConnectME Authority.”

The ConnectME Authority was established in 2006. Since that time ConnectME has been operating under major substantive rule-making. ConnectME has established procedures for working with providers and communities. The technology market moves quite quickly and transitioning ConnectME oversight from major substantive rule-making to routine technical rule-making would allow ConnectME to move more quickly. As technology, available funding and the needs of rural Maine become more challenging, adapting rules within the statutory framework will allow the Authority to make the best possible investments in support of broadband expansion across Maine, especially hard to reach rural areas.

This change does not remove the requirement that ConnectME Authority hold public hearings and take public comments to ensure there is input and oversight over potential rule changes. It just removes the long period of time from when we determine a change is needed and input has been given to when we can execute that change. The Authority holds monthly meetings and any change to rules would require final approval in forum. The Authority also reports annually to this Committee and any rule changes or potential changes will be part of that report.

Expansion of broadband infrastructure and adoption will only happen with many partners including the state, communities and providers all working together. We believe this move to routine technical rule-making will facilitate that work in the most effective way.

Thank you for your time. I'm happy to take any questions the committee has.