



**Thomas A. Schatz, *President***  
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Washington, D.C. 20036  
[ccagw.org](http://ccagw.org)

June 14, 2021

Governor Janet Mills  
136 State Street  
Augusta, ME 04330

Dear Governor Mills,

On June 10, 2021, the Maine Senate passed LD 1432, which passed the House of Representatives on June 9, 2021. The legislation creates a funding program for municipal broadband networks and sets the minimum standard at a symmetrical 100/100 Mbps speed. With this new speed threshold definition, nearly every community in the state would qualify for funding, essentially creating a statewide broadband network that would fail to achieve the goal of bridging the digital divide. On behalf of the 9,509 members and supporters of the Council for Citizens Against Government Waste (CCAGW) in Maine, I urge you to veto LD 1432.

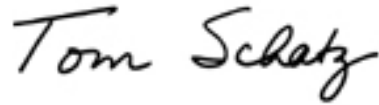
LD 1432 makes changes to the Municipal Gigabit Broadband Network Access Fund, which is intended to bridge the digital divide by providing grant funding to unserved and underserved communities across the state. In addition to setting a new speed threshold for minimum broadband connectivity, the bill eliminates the \$200,000 cap on implementation grants from the fund, while limiting the amount of ConnectMaine funds that may be used to 50 percent of the total project cost. It also creates a new definition of unserved communities as those with only one provider offering the new minimum speed threshold. Sen. Angus King (I-Maine) has suggested that these projects be “future proof,” meaning there would be a preference or limitation for fiber to the home (FTTH). Bridging the digital divide requires that every technology must be available for broadband, including cable, DSL, FTTH, fixed wireless broadband, mobile broadband, low earth orbit satellites, and the use of TV white spaces

In July 2020, Maine voters [approved](#) a \$15 million bond referendum that provided grant funding for the ConnectMaine Authority, with nearly \$8.7 million of these funds already being awarded for 20 broadband infrastructure projects in 11 counties across the state. It is my understanding that the state plans to use another \$150 million from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to provide additional funding for the ConnectMaine Authority grant program, with the stipulations found in LD 1432.

States should not be using taxpayer resources, including funding provided through the ARPA, to provision government-owned broadband networks (GONS), through legislation like LD 1432 that redefines requirements for buildout at a level that would qualify as unserved or underserved communities which already have service provided by one or more internet service provider. I would ask that you review Citizens Against Government Waste’s May 2021 [report](#), which describes the failure and costs of GONS.

Bridging the digital divide is critical in states like Maine that have a largely rural population, but any legislation that is passed must provide a sustainable solution that leverages public-private partnerships and seeks to first serve those communities that are truly unserved at the current Federal Communications Commission designation of 25/3 Mbps speed threshold. Signing LD 1432 would both fail to achieve that objective and lead to the waste of tens of millions of taxpayer dollars.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Schatz". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.