



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Testimony of Representative Robert Alley, Sr. Introducing LD 423, "An Act to Extend Internet Availability in Rural Maine" March 1, 2017

Good morning Senator Woodsome, Representative Berry and members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee. I am Representative Robert Alley, and I represent eleven communities in Washington County. I am here today to introduce of LD 423, "An Act to Extend Internet Availability in Rural Maine."

Where I live in Washington County, it can be tough to get internet service. Internet availability has become more and more of a necessity, especially for students and small business people. It is a common occurrence to see cars parked outside the Jonesport Library at night just so the people inside, generally students, can access the wi-fi they need.

For the last two years, people have had another option - they could check a wi-fi hotspot out of the library so they could have internet access at home. These little devices have been a real godsend – the only complaints I heard were that there weren't enough of them and they could only check them out for a limited time.

The hotspots were paid for by a two-year grant from the New York City Public Library. They wanted to see how well they would work in a rural environment. The answer was that they were a success.

Unfortunately, the grant has ended, and the devices are being called back in. This bill would simply extend the grant, with General Fund money, for another two years. Hopefully, by the end of that period, internet availability in the rural parts of the state will have improved enough so it won't need to be extended again. But as of now, the internet availability that people Downeast need to succeed just isn't readily available.

I hope you will vote that this bill ought to pass. The people back home would really appreciate it.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

District 138 Addison, Beals, Cherryfield, Columbia, Columbia Falls, Harrington, Jonesboro, Jonesport, Marshfield, Milbride and Whitneyville, plus the unorganized territory of Centerville Township