

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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130th MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION-2021

Legislative Document

No. 1107

S.P. 368

In Senate, March 22, 2021

**An Act To Create Needed Broadband Infrastructure in Rural
Maine through the Establishment of a Satellite-based Broadband
Grant Program**

Received by the Secretary of the Senate on March 18, 2021. Referred to the Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology pursuant to Joint Rule 308.2 and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D M Grant'.

DAREK M. GRANT
Secretary of the Senate

Presented by Senator STEWART of Aroostook.
Cosponsored by Senators: President JACKSON of Aroostook, LUCHINI of Hancock,
MIRAMANT of Knox, Representatives: CARLOW of Buxton, WADSWORTH of Hiram.

1 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

2 **Sec. 1. 35-A MRSA §9219** is enacted to read:

3 **§9219. Satellite-based broadband grants**

4 **1. Definitions.** As used in this section, unless the context otherwise indicates, the
5 following terms have the following meanings.

6 A. "Applicant" means an individual that applies for a grant under this section.

7 B. "Fund" means the Satellite-based Broadband Grant Fund established in subsection
8 2.

9 C. "Satellite-based provider" means a broadband service provider that provides
10 Internet access directly to consumers using satellite technology.

11 **2. Fund established.** The Satellite-based Broadband Grant Fund is established as a
12 nonlapsing fund administered by the commission to provide grants to applicants in
13 accordance with the purposes in subsection 3. All money in the fund must be continuously
14 applied by the commission to carry out this section. The commission may receive and
15 deposit in the fund funds from the following sources:

16 A. Federal funds and awards that may be used for the purposes of this section; and

17 B. Any other funds from public or private sources received in support of the purposes
18 for which the fund is established.

19 **3. Purpose of fund.** The fund is established to address the need in the State for access
20 to broadband services, particularly in the unserved or underserved areas of the State, by
21 providing grants to eligible applicants for installation and other advance costs associated
22 with the acquisition of broadband access from a satellite-based provider. To the extent
23 funds are available, the fund must be used to provide grants to applicants meeting the
24 requirements of subsection 4 and in accordance with the award criteria in subsection 5.

25 **4. Grant requirements.** An applicant for a grant under this section must submit an
26 application to the commission on a form prepared and made available by the commission.
27 The commission shall establish application requirements for grants under this section,
28 which must include, but are not limited to:

29 A. A requirement that grants be awarded only to individuals applying on behalf of a
30 residential household and that grants may not be awarded to business entities;

31 B. A requirement that an applicant may not have previously received a grant under the
32 program;

33 C. A requirement that an applicant provide information regarding the satellite-based
34 provider from which the applicant intends to acquire broadband access;

35 D. A requirement that an applicant provide documentation of the installation and other
36 advance costs required by the satellite-based provider for the applicant to initially
37 acquire broadband access;

38 E. A prohibition on the awarding of grants for broadband access costs not described
39 in paragraph D, such as monthly service charges; and

1 F. A prohibition on the awarding of grants for broadband access costs associated with
2 broadband providers that are not satellite-based providers.

3 **5. Awarding of grants; additional criteria.** To the extent funds are available and in
4 accordance with this subsection, the commission shall award grants to applicants that have
5 provided the required information under subsection 4 and meet any other eligibility criteria
6 established by the commission.

7 A. The maximum amount of a grant that may be awarded to an applicant is \$500.

8 B. The commission may not award more than one grant under this section to the same
9 residential household.

10 C. The commission shall prioritize the awarding of grants to applicants located in
11 unserved or underserved areas of the State.

12 **6. Collaboration with ConnectMaine Authority; technical assistance.** At the
13 request of the commission, the authority shall provide to the commission all information
14 and assistance necessary for the administration of this section. The commission may
15 provide technical assistance to applicants who request assistance with the grant application
16 process under this section.

17 **7. Rules; application procedure.** The commission may adopt rules to implement this
18 section, including rules governing the application process for grants under this section.
19 Rules adopted under this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter
20 375, subchapter 2-A.

21 **Sec. 2. Appropriations and allocations.** The following appropriations and
22 allocations are made.

23 **PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**

24 **Satellite-based Broadband Grant Fund N354**

25 Initiative: Provides a one-time appropriation to be used for grants for broadband access
26 costs for satellite-based broadband services in accordance with the Maine Revised Statutes,
27 Title 35-A, section 9219.

28 GENERAL FUND	2021-22	2022-23
29 All Other	\$0	\$1,000,000
30		
31 GENERAL FUND TOTAL	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$1,000,000</u>

32 **SUMMARY**

33 This bill establishes a satellite-based broadband grant program, to be developed and
34 administered by the Public Utilities Commission, to provide grants of up to \$500 to
35 individuals for installation costs and other advance costs associated with the initial
36 acquisition of broadband access from a satellite-based broadband provider. Under the
37 program, grant priority is to be given to applicants from unserved or underserved areas of
38 the State. This grant program is capitalized under the bill through a one-time General Fund
39 appropriation of \$1,000,000.