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Testimony on L.D. 1153,
"An Act To Establish a Village Corporation"

Presented by
Representative Susan M. W. Austin
District 67

State and Local Government Committee
Monday, April 24, 2017

Good morning, Senator Davis, Representative Martin, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government:

I am State Representative Sue Austin, and I proudly represent District 67, which includes portions of Gray, Raymond, and Casco, as well as all of Frye Island. It is an honor to appear before you today for the purpose of introducing L.D. 1153, *"An Act To Establish a Village Corporation."*

To begin, it should be pointed out that the language in the summary referring to authorization of consolidation with another municipality should not be part of this bill and is **NOT**, nor ever has been, the intent of this bill.

With Frye Island being one of four communities within my district, I have been working with the good folks of the Island for almost three years on issues surrounding their sustainability as a municipality. They have some very unprecedented issues, as the Island is in a very unusual setting with its unique position as the only fresh water island town in Maine.

Frye Island is also a seasonal community, open from April to November. Other similarly situated islands off the coast of

Over, please

District 67 portions of Gray, Raymond, Casco and all of Frye Island

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Maine presently employ village corporations as a tool in their ability to manage and govern their island communities.

Frye Island is in the midst of strategic planning and may need the use of a village corporation as a valuable tool in managing a more successful, predictable, and sustainable future. Having said that, they are not yet ready to present you with a fully descriptive and detailed bill. I ask you to carry this bill over to the Second Regular Session so that Frye Island may have the option to continue their planning and have this proposal ready in the wings to utilize if necessary.

Committee members, I do not ask this of you lightly! In the years that I have come to know the Island's leadership and their citizens, I have found them committed to being very responsible, self-sufficient stewards of their small island community and of the valued resources of this state. One ferry trip to their shore reveals all the services that they independently, from within the community, provide for the health, wellbeing, and safety of those folks who are citizens, as well as those strictly summer vacationers amongst them. Frye's leadership has repeatedly assembled for sound dialogue with the leadership of their neighboring towns to explain and share their candid, transparent concerns regarding their long-term financial feasibility and their mission to remain self-standing and responsible tax paying contributors. L.D. 1153 may be the answer to assist them to grow, remain, and sustain their successful self-sufficiency in good standing as a community amongst their peers.

Thank you for your avid attention this morning and for your conscientious consideration of this matter between now and the work session regarding the future of Maine's only fresh water island town.