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February 15, 2023

Senator Margaret Rotundo, Chair
Representative Melanie Sachs, Chair
Members of Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee
5 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: LD 258 – Biennial Budget - Department of Administrative and Financial Services – Information Services - GeoLibrary Related Budget Items

Dear Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs and Members of the Appropriations and Finance Committee:

The Maine Water Utilities Association (MWUA) appreciates the opportunity to provide a letter in support for two budget proposals related to the Maine Library of Geographic Information (“the GeoLibrary”). The two initiatives are:

- *Administrative and Financial Services*
 - *Information Services*
 - *Office of Information Services Fund*
 - *Establishes one Public Service Coordinator I position and one System Analyst position to serve Geospatial mapping needs and provides All Other related costs.*
 - *Provides funding for state Orthoimagery Collection Projects coordinated by the GeoLibrary Board providing high resolution aerial images of the State of Maine.*

About MWUA. The Maine Water Utilities Association is a nonprofit association based in Augusta that provides support for water works professionals throughout the State of Maine in advocating for safe drinking water through educational and technical programming as well as advocacy on the local, state, and national level. The Association was formed in 1925 and counts approximately 109 water utilities in Maine as members.

Water utilities across the State of Maine make significant use of the GeoLibrary’s data. We rely on the GeoLibrary for orthoimagery (aerial imagery), statewide parcel data, and LiDAR-based elevation datasets. These datasets are highly important to a utility’s daily operation as well as in our planning processes. The GeoLibrary also provides valuable services coordinating the production of high-resolution landcover data with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the University of Maine; such datasets are critical in our efforts to protect water resources.

An adequately funded GeoLibrary allows water utilities to focus on their mission – public health and safety. Without state coordination of spatial data, we would face significant data acquisition costs. For example, focusing only on the orthoimagery program, the Portland Water District alone estimates they would need to spend well in excess of \$200,000 over a period of five years for equivalent imagery. If utilities contracted to acquire the data themselves, and not through the State, they would incur greater demands on their resources due to managing and coordinating the data. These costs would be passed directly to customers.

MWUA encourages you to support these initiatives. Thank you for your consideration.

Yours for safe drinking water,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Roger Crouse". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Roger" and last name "Crouse" clearly distinguishable.

Roger Crouse,
Chair, Legislative Committee, Maine Water Utilities Association
General Manager, Kennebec Water District