

Lois Kilby-Chesley
Friends of the West Durham Methodist Church
LD 912

Regarding LD 912

To: Honorable Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and esteemed members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee

From: Lois Kilby-Chesley

My name is Lois Kilby-Chesley, and I reside in Durham, ME. I am in support of LD 912. I represent the Friends of the West Durham Methodist Church, a non-profit organization with the goal of restoring our formally abandoned Church. I am also a member of the Durham Historical Society and chair of the Durham Historic District Commission, a Town appointed committee.

The West Durham Methodist Church is an historic Methodist church at 23 Runaround Pond Road in West Durham, Maine. Built in 1804 and significantly restyled in 1867, it is a fine example of Greek Revival architecture with added Italianate features. The congregation for which it was built grew out of a Methodist revival meeting held at the site, and it was one of the first Methodist congregations in the state, and reportedly the oldest remaining currently standing. The building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2003.

Decades of neglect have led to significant decay to the building. Since receiving ownership of the Church from the Town of Durham, for the last three years our group has struggled to obtain the grants necessary to preserve, restore and repair the building. Costs are estimated to be at least \$200,000. A private foundation gave us our first grant in 2020 which replaced the roof, repaired the rafters and began the process of repairing the foundation. A second and third grant provided money to restore the windows. All together we have raised about \$70,000. We continually look for grant opportunities and to fundraise so we can continue our progress. Funds are limited and we recognize our non-profit is one among many. Without additional grant opportunities in the near future, this building will continue to deteriorate, with the possibility of becoming too far gone to try to rehabilitate. For the community of Durham the loss would have immense impact on preserving our history.

LD 912, is described as:

Providing funds to restore historic community buildings, with funds being issued contingent on a 50% local match requirement from either private or nonprofit sources, and with the process to be administered by the Director of the Maine Historic Preservation Commission.

The \$25,000,000 General Fund bond would be a huge asset to small non-profits such as ours as we struggle to preserve important buildings from Maine's past. I encourage you to vote for LD 912. Thank you for this consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have at any time, to the best of my ability.