

Testimony of Robert G. Marvinney
in Support of
An Act to Improve Geographic Information System Data Acquisition and Maintenance
LD 1687

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Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, and members of the Committee, I am Robert Marvinney of Readfield, Maine, testifying in support of LD 1687, “An Act to Improve Geographic Information System Data Acquisition and Maintenance.” Prior to my retirement in 2021, I served in Maine State government for 34 years, 26 of those in the appointed position of Bureau Director and State Geologist in the Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry (DACF). During those years I worked to advance the adoption of and applications of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to natural resource assessments and analysis throughout State government. All the programs in my Bureau, other programs in the DACF, and many in other departments currently use GIS as an essential tool for mapping resources, analyzing trends over time, establishing land acquisition priorities, tracking permits, mapping hazards, transportation planning, and many others. What began as a novelty in my Department in 1990 is now a tool that is fully integrated into the functioning of State government.

An important part of that integration is the Maine Library of Geographic Information (Geolibrary) which coordinates and serves digital information developed by state agencies to public and private users throughout the State. Furthermore, the Geolibrary has the important role of coordinating the effort to collect vital basemap information statewide, such as the light detection and ranging (lidar) data and aerial and orthoimagery data that are the subject of this bill. Lidar provides detailed topographic information that is important to development planning, the identification of flood plains and other hazards, assessing natural resources, and other applications. Orthoimagery is detailed digital aerial photography that is used by government at all levels and the private sector and is indispensable for change analysis, resource assessments, and planning of all types. Funds provided to the Geolibrary will leverage significant federal funds that will greatly enhance these data acquisition efforts.

Over the decades of use of GIS in State government, most of the costs of storing data, coordinating efforts, and acquisition of new data have been borne by the State agencies through user fees, although significant usage of these data is outside of State government. As a result, the Geolibrary has been seriously underfunded and understaffed. The positions identified in this bill will provide necessary coordination of efforts and oversight of data acquisition projects, resulting in better data quality and improved accessibility for public and private users across the State.

I urge you to support this bill.