



**Testimony by William Norbert
Governmental Affairs and Communications Manager**

in Support of L.D. 2039

***An Act to Amend the Law Regarding the Board of the Finance Authority of Maine to
Allow for the Addition of a Proxy Designee***

January 23, 2024

**Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development,
Economic Advancement, and Business**

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement, and Business:

My name is Bill Norbert. I am the Governmental Affairs and Communications Manager at the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME). I am here to testify in support of L.D. 2039, *An Act to Amend the Law Regarding the Board of the Finance Authority of Maine to Allow for the Addition of a Proxy Designee*.

This bill allows the natural resources commissioner designated by the Governor for membership on the board of FAME to designate a proxy at board meetings, similar to the authority currently held by the Commissioner of Economic and Community Development. We support this change as it will allow for greater flexibility and participation by the department represented on the FAME board of directors.

As you will recall, there are fifteen FAME board members designated in statute. Some of these positions are at-large while others related to specific backgrounds or positions held by an individual; for example, a certified public accountant; attorney; commercial banker; veterans; and certain commissioners. The FAME Act designates at 10 M.R.S.A. Section 965(4) that certain state officials hold a seat on the FAME board by reason of their office or "*ex officio*." We enjoy participation by the Commissioner of Economic and Community Development; the State Treasurer; and a "natural resources commissioner" designated by the Governor. This natural resources commissioner may represent either the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry or the Department of Marine Resources. Governor Mills has designated Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry Amanda Beal to sit on the FAME board. We have experienced and benefitted from the designation of both types of commissioners over the years, and very much enjoy and appreciate Commissioner Beal's current participation and input on the board.

The statute allows for the Commissioner of Economic and Community Development *or the commissioner's designee* to attend and vote at regular board meetings but is silent with respect to the natural resources commissioner being allowed to designate a department representative. We think it is time this provision changed for both consistency's sake and practical reasons. A busy commissioner having the flexibility and ability to designate a departmental representative to attend and vote at FAME meetings is a useful and helpful tool. Commissioners do their best to attend and participate at our monthly meetings, but they are very busy and, in addition to their regular duties, often sit on a variety of boards. This change can help ensure that their department is represented and that they can attend to other important duties when necessary.

We hope you will join us in supporting this overdue change.

Thank you for your consideration of the bill. I will be happy to answer any questions you have.