

James Fisher  
Town of Deer Isle, et al.  
LD 2214

I am writing to support the appropriation creating the Maine Office of Community Affairs (MOCA) and specifically to begin the process by hiring a director.

I have been a planner in Maine for more than 20 years and currently serve as the Deer Isle Town Manager. I am also the Chair of the Hancock County Planning Commission and member of the Board of Directors of the Maine Association of Planners. In the past I have served on the Faculty at Bates College, University of Maine Augusta and Eastern Maine Community College. I hold a Masters Degree and PhD in Planning.

During my decades of experience in Maine I have come to appreciate the need for coordination in planning at multiple levels, including the State, Regional Councils or Planning Commissions and municipalities. When all three work together we can accomplish a great deal. I think the State has done a good job rebuilding planning with the Municipal Planning Assistance Program, BRILUP, DACF, DOT, DECD, DEP, the Fire Marshal's Office and other agencies. The challenge is the silo effect that can segregate planning across disparate State offices.

Establishing MOCA as a coordinating body can streamline planning and present municipalities with a single entity for many of our questions. MOCA can also serve as a conduit to the essential work carried out by Regional Councils. This is a step forward that should begin with a Director who can work across State Departments to build a coordinated team.

Thank you.