



Serving the Municipalities of Southern Maine for Over 50 years

Testimony of the Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission

LD2214, An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds and to Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025 - January 9, 2024

Dear Sen. Rotundo, Rep. Sachs, and Members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee,

On behalf of the Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission (SMPDC) Executive Committee, please accept this testimony in full support of LD 2214, 2024 Supplemental Budget regarding the creation of a Maine Office of Community Affairs. SMPDC is a Regional Planning Organization (RPO) established under Maine Statute that has been in place since 1965. We provide technical assistance and planning support to 39 towns in York, and southern Oxford counties in the areas of economic development, transportation, land use and sustainability/resiliency. Much of the success of our organization in all these sectors is reliant on interactions with numerous state agencies.

The Maine Office of Community Affairs will greatly increase the efficiency of the network of support that many Maine communities are currently seeking, as well as assist our agency and our fellow RPO's in providing that support. Maine communities are being asked to respond to a number of challenges - from housing to climate change & resiliency to increasingly complex regulatory requirements. Yet, there are also many opportunities in the form of state and federal grants and programs which can assist in meeting those challenges. A more coordinated approach at state level could greatly aid cities and towns in accessing those opportunities and aid our agencies in providing the efficient technical assistance necessary for their success.

It is clear that the issues we are dealing with statewide are interdisciplinary in nature. It is no longer easy to say the challenges we are facing necessarily fall under the guidance or purview of one agency or another. Resources and guidance may come from numerous departments. Going forward, it is critical that we are speaking with one voice as we attempt to assist municipalities in understanding the best path forward.

SMPDC is positioned to assist the Maine state government in moving forward with a more comprehensive approach to service delivery, and therefore we strongly support the establishment of the Maine Office of Community Affairs.

Thank you for your consideration,

SMPDC Executive Committee

Jan Williams, *Town of Hiram, Chair*
Denise Clavette, *South Berwick Economic Development Director, Vice Chair*
Kendra Amaral, *Kittery Town Manager*
Chris Osterrider, *Kennebunk Community and Development Director*
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