

Luke Dyer
Town of Van Buren
LD 210

Dear Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for Part D of the budget, which proposes consolidating seven existing programs into the Maine Office of Community Affairs (MOCA). As the Town Manager of Van Buren, a small rural community in northern Maine, I understand firsthand the challenges municipalities face when addressing planning, housing, and resilience issues. This is particularly true for towns that do not have the internal expertise needed to navigate these complex areas and must rely on outside guidance to access critical resources and support.

Municipalities, regardless of size, often lack dedicated staff with expertise in areas such as climate resilience, housing development, floodplain management, and code enforcement. In Van Buren, where I have little to no environmental educational background that allows me to identify deficiencies in our town's climate resilience, we require technical assistance and funding support to implement solutions effectively. For many communities, like ours, that do not have access to this expertise, MOCA's role as a centralized, one-stop-shop will be invaluable.

Currently, municipalities must navigate multiple state agencies to address these critical issues, leading to inefficiencies, delays, and missed opportunities for funding and technical assistance. By consolidating planning, housing, resilience, and municipal support functions under one umbrella, MOCA will create a more responsive and coordinated approach to serving Maine's communities. This structure will be especially beneficial for rural towns like Van Buren that are actively working to improve infrastructure, attract new development, and build climate resilience but lack the capacity to manage these efforts alone.

Additionally, the proposed restructuring of the Development Ready Advisory Committee within MOCA will provide an essential forum for municipalities, regional entities, and stakeholders to align policies and receive consistent technical guidance. Having a network of state and regional experts who work in close coordination will ensure that all Maine communities, regardless of their size or resources, have equitable access to the support they need to plan for a more resilient future.

I urge you to support the funding and implementation of Part D of the budget. By investing in MOCA, the state will provide municipalities with the tools and expertise they need to strengthen local planning efforts, address housing challenges, and enhance climate resilience. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Luke Dyer
Town Manager
Town of Van Buren