

## Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

In Opposition to

**LD 183 – An Act to Cap Publicly Owned Land Area at No More than 50 Percent of Any County**

February 6, 2025

---

Sen. Talbot Ross, Rep. Pluecker and distinguished members of the Agriculture Conservation and Forestry Committee, my name is Rebecca Graham, and I am providing testimony in opposition to LD 183, *An Act to Cap Publicly Owned Land Area at No More than 50 Percent of Any County*, at the direction of MMA's Legislative Policy Committee (LPC). Our LPC is made up of individuals from across Maine with municipal officials elected by their peers across Maine's 35 Senate districts representing communities with very different access to available enforcement resources and local capacity.

Municipal officials have a deep understanding of the added burdens untaxable property adds to the rest of the taxpayers in a municipality. It has been the decision of the Legislature to create untaxable property while only paying for the loss to the community for those exemption programs or even requiring impacted community involvement in the process. From the municipal point of view, these two policy decisions are the real problem for the burden of untaxed property statewide.

As drafted, this bill requires a municipality who has already consulted with their legislative body—their residents—to be forced to then ask the legislature to purchase or conserve the land requested at the behest of their own community or to protect natural resources simply because other communities have large university campuses, hospitals, parks or state office complexes in their county. Not only is this a blunt policy attempting to address a nuanced reality, it fails to provide and directly undermines agency and voice to enact change by the very same people impacted by exemptions.

Municipal ownership and public lands are also low barrier ways that municipalities can prevent harm caused by development to watersheds and important natural resources while also providing public access to working waterfronts and areas of outstanding natural beauty that drive Maine's economy. Unlike much of the legislatively created exemption programs, municipalities receive explicit support or opposition for the purchase of municipally owned lands and easements from adjacent impacted property taxpayers. Returning to the legislature for final approval when such an activity has no tax impact on other communities is untenable and disrespectful.

All obvious Constitutional reasons aside, it is for these reasons municipal officials ask that you oppose LD 183 or amend it to address the real issues of legislatively created and uncompensated property tax exemptions with no resident input.