



Testimony in Support of LD 857:

“An Act to Increase Government Transparency in the Procurement of Goods and Services”

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and the distinguished members of the Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Harris Van Pate and I serve as policy analyst for Maine Policy Institute. Maine Policy is a free market think tank, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that advocates for individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 857, “An Act to Increase Government Transparency in the Procurement of Goods and Services.”

This bill takes a meaningful step toward restoring accountability and public confidence in state government by ensuring that contract awards for goods and services are fully transparent and subject to public scrutiny.

LD 857 requires the Bureau of General Services to preserve and make all records related to the competitive bidding process publicly available, including notices of intent to waive competitive bidding. It also directs the department to recover and publish past notices of such waivers. These fundamental reforms support the public’s right to know how taxpayer dollars are spent and with whom the government is doing business.

Competitive bidding exists to foster fairness, reduce costs, and prevent cronyism in government contracting. Yet when the state waives this process without transparency or oversight, it opens the door to favoritism, inflated prices, and diminished public trust. Waiving competitive bidding may sometimes be necessary, but those decisions should never be hidden from public view.

In recent years, at the state and federal levels, Mainers have seen high-profile examples of mismanaged or opaque contracting processes—especially in emergencies—where millions of dollars were spent with little public accountability. LD 857 is a proactive measure that would improve Maine’s resilience and integrity by ensuring that future contracting decisions are well-documented, transparent, and accessible to all.

Moreover, this reform is in line with national best practices. Many states, including Ohio¹ and Texas², maintain online portals detailing active and past procurement contracts. Maine should not fall behind in embracing open government, especially considering how poorly our state’s transparency has ranked compared to other states.

¹ <https://ohio.gov/business/resources/ohiobuys-overview>

² <https://comptroller.texas.gov/purchasing/>



Maine was graded an “F” score by the Center for Public Integrity, a politically independent watchdog group, when it ranked states on transparency and accountability, placing us as the seventh worst-ranked state in the nation.³ We were also considered by the same ranking as the least transparent state in New England, with Vermont, the closest ranked state in the region, six ranks above Maine. Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut are among the top eleven states in the nation for transparency.

Government transparency is not a partisan issue but a pillar of good governance. The people of Maine have the right to know how their money is spent, and contractors deserve a level playing field when doing business with the state. LD 857 upholds these principles and represents a common-sense reform to strengthen trust in state operations.

For these reasons, we urge the committee to vote “Ought to Pass” on LD 857. Thank you for your time and consideration.

³ <https://publicintegrity.org/politics/state-politics/state-integrity-investigation/how-does-your-state-rank-for-integrity/>