

## Testimony in support of LD 1404

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and esteemed committee members,

My name is Cathleen Miller. I live in Scarborough, and I work as a librarian and archivist. I also serve as the current chair of the Maine Library Association's Intellectual Freedom Committee. I am writing to strongly support LD 1404. This bill would establish a process for multiple stakeholders to assess the needs of our libraries across the state, and to make recommendations about ways to better serve the people of Maine.

Our libraries are the hearts of our communities, and are at the core of our democratic system, providing information to everyone without discrimination. There are few places where you can enter just to use the wifi or to get out of the cold, yet these vital services are central to the missions of our state's libraries. When the power is out, libraries offer warming or cooling centers, places to charge devices and connect with loved ones, and offer free and accessible entertainment for the whole family, with options for everyone regardless of their interests.

Libraries allow us to learn about ideas we may never have had the opportunity to encounter otherwise. When I was a child, there was no library nearby, but I had access to my public school library. This was a place of refuge where I was able to access books that offered me ways to take vacations that my family could not afford, to do research for classes, or to simply find quiet in the chaotic school environment. I never imagined then that I would become a librarian.

Whether libraries serve rural patrons with limited access to information, or school children and young adults, the services that libraries offer change people's lives for the better. This bill will offer us the opportunity to evaluate how libraries can equitably serve every community by providing access to quality information,

services, and resources that serve a broad range of interests and perspectives.

Libraries are nonpartisan, and provide places to explore a wide diversity of viewpoints. Our policies support patrons' right to privacy and freedom of speech. We offer vital public space that is always free of charge. Libraries are at risk because of a wide range of threats, from funding cuts to attacks on intellectual freedom, and this working group would allow for assessment of how best to support Maine's diverse libraries and library workers.

I urge you to support LD 1404 to continue Maine's tradition of vibrant community spaces and free exchange of ideas. Thank you for your time and consideration.