

April 12, 2025

Subject: Testimony in favor of LD 1417 "An Act to Strengthen the Authority of Local Officials to Enforce Provisions Regarding Dangerous and Nuisance Properties that Constitute a Threat to Public Health and Safety"

Small towns in rural Maine need the ability to have their officers coordinate and work together under common rules and procedures. For my town, those officers are the Code Enforcement Officer, the Local Health Officer, and the Fire Chief. Under current law, their coordination is through different paths. The CEO works through the 80K process, the LHO works through DHHS, and the Fire Chief through the court system under different authorities.

A prime example of our problem is a group of individuals who are known schedule drug users and purveyors, thieves, operating in adverse possession (squatting) and causing physical destruction of private property (e.g., stripping copper wire from a home). These people move about between several properties and receive police visits several times a month.

Often the yards and barns are filled with junk cars, trash, and gasoline and propane containers. There are stray cats, rats, racoons, and other animals that feed on unprotected garbage and animal feces. The properties present a risk to any child who wanders into it.

Working singly and in their own legal domains, these officers cannot act effectively to handle these kinds of problems. Working together under a common legal framework, they can make significant improvements for the town.

I strongly support this bill and urge you to pass it into law.

V/r

John Lowry
Chairman, Town of Porter Selectboard