



## Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

### In Opposition To

LD 1593 - *An Act to Require Certain Public Entities to Define Their Use of the Term "Equity"*  
May 5, 2025

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Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury and members of the State and Local Government Committee, my name is Rebecca Lambert, and I am providing updated testimony in opposition to LD 1593 on behalf of the Maine Municipal Association's (MMA) elected 70-member Legislative Policy Committee (LPC). For reference, MMA is a nonpartisan, nonprofit member service organization and aims to help provide policy solutions that work for all residents in Maine and the LPC guides the advocacy efforts and establishes positions on bills of municipal interest.

Equity is a core value of any municipality who are committed to reducing disparities and ensuring that all residents have an opportunity to thrive, regardless of race, income, disability, or background. However, a blanket requirement to define equity and the metrics used for every decision not only misunderstands the nature of equity work, but it also impairs the ability to respond effectively to local needs.

What equity looks like in rural communities may very well be different from what it means in urban neighborhoods and is not a one-size-fits-all concept. In some cases, it means prioritizing language access, in others it could mean investing in transportation for underserved areas. Forcing a rigid, up-front definition ignores the context-specific nature of equitable policymaking and substitutes bureaucratic checkboxes for meaningful, community-informed action.

Likewise, the proposed requirement will create administrative burdens that disproportionately impact under-resourced municipalities in Maine. Equity-driven decisions often occur through budgeting, zoning, service design, and emergency response. Requiring a formal definition and set of metrics every time a community makes an equity-based decision, would delay critical services, and drain staff capacity.

Finally, a community's understanding of what is equitable evolves with community input, data, and lived experience. To codifying a single definition or metric prematurely could freeze that evolution, or worse, allow political actors to manipulate equity definitions to suit ideological aims. During a time when trust in government is fragile, we cannot afford to create more red tape that obstructs the delivery of fair and responsive services. Equity must remain flexible, adaptive, and rooted in local reality, not dictated from above.

For these reasons, local leaders would urge you to move ought not to pass on LD 1593. Thank you for your time and for considering the municipal perspective on this issue.

