

Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

In Support for

***LD 1771 - An Act to Strengthen Oversight of Kennels by Changing the Licensing Authority from
Municipalities to the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry***

May 6, 2025

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and esteemed members of the Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry Committee, my name is Rebecca Graham, and I am submitting testimony on behalf of the Maine Municipal Association's Legislative Policy Committee (LPC) in support for LD 1771, *An Act to Strengthen Oversight of Kennels by Changing the Licensing Authority from Municipalities to the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry*.

Municipalities are forced to carry out the lion's share of government tasks in under-resourced ways. Moving this licensing program to the department makes a lot of sense however, there are other land use considerations that should be incorporated in the final program that should require a municipal sign off that a new or continually operating kennel is not in violation of local land use provisions that include maintaining a residential status for kennels that are operating in residential areas that are not explicitly covered in the kennel license program, while also requiring new duties upon an animal control officer hired by the municipality.

It's important to note that the bill still requires an ACO primary inspection so none of the unsubstantiated claims of conflicts of interest would be addressed by this bill. As you have also heard, the lack of state support to date has largely resulted in the existing program deficiencies and the current database issues are a direct result of not funding the mandate and not engaging with municipalities or understanding what systems already exist.

The fees attached to the program under §3932-B should bear a reasonable nexus to the cost of carrying out the duties implied under the licensing program. On site reviews consume a great deal of time and should be viewed as a fix rate of a minimum of \$45 to the local animal welfare fund in line with similar reviews for other permitting fees including building permits, electrical and plumbing reviews etc. particularly as the kennels have life safety concerns of the animals housed associated with their operations. The cost of ACO time for the annual inspections needed to license a kennel should be supported by the fees and not left to local property tax dollars to subsidize. Current municipal kennels are municipally owned and operated already inspected by existing employees; think about the way other facilities are managed with state nexus like waste water, or stormwater. The state should play a role in the lifting the administrative burden for the permit and not charge the municipality for the review carried out by the municipality.

Officials hope that you will consider amending the program to adequately support the duties of municipal ACO's where they are tasks with the annual inspections and also consider the need to include

municipal sign off that a kennel is operating with in all other local ordinance provisions including business licensing in good standing where it is required.

Officials support the provision of the department playing a stronger role in the oversight and licensing of kennels more generally. They encourage you to support the fiscal note this program will require but perhaps make the department accomplish the oversight and inspection rather than ask the ACO to do so and charge them for the task.

Rebecca Graham
Maine Municipal Association
LD 1771
Corrected submission