



# Maine County Commissioners Association

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January 28, 2026

Sen. Baldacci, Chair  
Rep. Salisbury, Chair  
Joint Standing Committee on State  
And Local Government  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: ***Comments of MCCA re LD 2158, An Act to Address Vacancies on the Knox County Budget Committee (Emergency)***

Chair Baldacci, Chair Salisbury, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government:

On behalf of the Maine County Commissioners Association (MCCA), we appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of LD 2158. MCCA supports this bill as a narrowly tailored, time-sensitive procedural measure that is necessary to allow Knox County to carry out its core budgeting responsibilities while preserving the longer-term role of the county charter and the voters.

**About MCCA.** Briefly, the Maine County Commissioners Association was established in 1890 to assist Maine's county government in providing vital services to Maine citizens in a responsive, efficient, and credible manner. The Association is based in Augusta, represents all 16 of Maine's counties, and is governed by a board with representation from each participating county.

**What does LD 2158 do?** Current general law in Maine establishes the Knox County Budget Committee as a nine-member body elected in even-numbered years. Under the Knox County Charter, the Budget Committee may not conduct business without a quorum of at least five members. These two requirements work fine when the Committee has a quorum; however, due to vacancies on the Budget Committee and the failure to fill those vacancies at the 2024 election, the Committee no longer has a quorum and is now unable to perform its statutory duties – approving the Knox County budget. LD 2158 addresses this problem in the short term by providing a temporary alternative method for appointing members to the Budget Committee so that it may regain a quorum and complete its work on the Knox County budget for 2026. The bill would then sunset in 2029.

**Why this legislation is necessary.** County budgets are foundational to the delivery of essential public services, including public safety, corrections, courts, and administrative functions. Without a functioning budget committee, Knox County cannot move forward with its budget process, creating significant uncertainty and risk. This bill addresses an immediate procedural impasse, not by permanently altering the county's governance structure, but rather by providing a short-term solution that allows the county to function while longer-term options are considered.

**Testimony of MCCA re LD 2158**

**January 28, 2026**

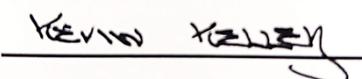
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**Charters require time to amend.** MCCA strongly supports the role of county charters and local voter control. At the same time, charter amendments are, by design, deliberate processes that require time, public engagement, and ultimately voter approval at a county-wide election. LD 2158 appropriately recognizes that reality. It allows Knox County to meet its immediate budgeting obligations while providing the necessary time and space for the county and its residents to consider whether charter changes are warranted in the future.

**Urgency and limited scope.** As reflected in the emergency preamble, this legislation must take effect as soon as possible to allow the Budget Committee to complete its work on the 2026 county budget. MCCA views LD 2158 as a practical, narrowly focused response to an unanticipated governance problem, crafted to address the present circumstances without setting broader precedent or undermining the charter process.

**Conclusion.** For these reasons, the Maine County Commissioners Association supports LD 2158 and respectfully urges the Committee to vote unanimously ought to pass with the emergency preamble. This bill provides Knox County with the tools it needs to fulfill its budgeting responsibilities while preserving the integrity of county charters and local decision-making.

Respectfully submitted,



Commissioner Kevin Kelley, Waldo County  
Co-Chair, Legislative Policy Committee, MCCA



Comm. Jean-Marie Caterina, Cumberland County  
Co-Chair, Legislative Policy Committee, MCCA

cc: Commissioner Andre Cushing, Penobscot County. President, MCCA  
James I. Cohen, Verrill Dana, LLP. Legislative counsel for MCCA

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