

Good Morning Senator Rotundo and Representative Gattine, Senator Baldacci and Representative Salisbury, and esteemed members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee and the State and Local Government Committee.

My name is Luke Shorty and I reside in Winthrop, Maine and am the Immediate Past Chair of Volunteer Maine, Maine's Commission for Community Service.

Volunteer Maine addresses critical needs in the state, particularly rural and underserved communities, through service and volunteerism. In 2025, Volunteer Maine delivered more than \$2 million in grants and contracts directly benefiting communities across Maine. Despite a challenging federal funding environment, the Commission remained focused in delivering in its core mission: to promote excellence in volunteer management, strengthen civic infrastructure, and ensure that service remains embedded as a problem-solving strategy across Maine's communities.

Most of the initiatives related to Volunteer Maine before you are housekeeping in nature—technical adjustments that help ensure Volunteer Maine can continue to operate efficiently and in alignment with state requirements. There is, however, one substantive proposal that we care deeply about that is not before you and that we believe presents Maine with an important opportunity to strengthen the long-term sustainability of an institution that serves communities across our entire state.

On behalf of Volunteer Maine's Commission, I would like to request General Fund support to cover 50% of the Executive Director's salary— \$18,392 in FY26 and \$74,603 in FY27. The remaining 50%—\$77,549 in FY27—would continue to be supported with federal funds. While this proposal was not included in the Governor's supplemental budget, we respectfully ask the AFA Committee to consider including it.

The justification is straightforward and forward-looking. Volunteer Maine's core funding has historically relied on federal AmeriCorps dollars. However, federal funding for AmeriCorps has been volatile and is expected to decrease—or potentially be eliminated—in the coming years. At the same time, federal grant funds prohibit fundraising activities. This creates a structural challenge: the very position responsible for leading and reshaping Volunteer Maine for long-term sustainability cannot use federal funds to raise the philanthropic or diversified support that will be essential to our future.

A modest state investment (roughly a nickel per Maine citizen) in 50% of the Executive Director's salary would put Volunteer Maine in a stronger position to navigate this changing funding landscape. It would allow the Executive Director to dedicate time to building philanthropic partnerships, exploring alternative funding models, strengthening statewide civic infrastructure, and preparing for multiple future scenarios. In short, it would allow Maine to

plan deliberately—rather than reactively—for a future in which our state’s community service and volunteer support systems may no longer be federally funded.

Under the Executive Director’s leadership, Volunteer Maine also successfully transitioned its administrative home to the Maine Office of Community Affairs (MOCA) in October 2025. We are very pleased to be part of this dynamic office, whose mission to strengthen state–municipal partnerships closely align with Volunteer Maine’s role in supporting community-based solutions. This move reinforces the opportunity before us to realign and position the Commission to sustainably serve the people of Maine for years to come.

At its core, this request is about service and civic engagement. After successfully launching the Maine Service Fellows program to serve communities in rural Maine who do not have the bandwidth or infrastructure to handle a large federal grant, making this investment in Volunteer Maine will help ensure that this in demand program can continue to grow and succeed. How, you ask? By allowing the Executive Director to find other philanthropic and alternative funding sources to support programs and partnerships that harness the energy, skills, and commitment of volunteers and service members to meet local needs. We are a force multiplier that strengthens Maine communities. We are also well positioned within MOCA. And with this strategic investment, we can keep moving forward and grow in ways we know are sustainable.

This is something we care about deeply—not simply as commissioners, but as Mainers who believe in the power of service to strengthen our communities.

Thank you for your consideration, and for your continued support of service and volunteerism across our state.