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March 1, 2023

Honorable Tim Nangle, Senate Chair
Honorable Holly Stover, House Chair
Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: LD 422, An Act to Eliminate the Requirement That Municipalities Provide Public Notice in Newspapers

Dear Senator Nangle, Representative Stover and members of the State and Local Government Committee:

The Maine Water Utilities Association appreciates the opportunity to provide information to the Committee in qualified support of LD 422.

About MWUA. The Maine Water Utilities Association is a nonprofit association based in Augusta that provides support for water works professionals throughout the State of Maine in advocating for safe drinking water through educational and technical programming as well as advocacy on the local, state, and national level. The Association was formed in 1925 and counts approximately 109 water utilities in Maine as members.

About the bill. Under this bill, a municipality in Maine would be permitted to provide public notice, as required by statute in certain instances, on its publicly accessible website instead of in a newspaper. Permitting this alternative way of providing notice recognizes that members of the public are more likely to directly access a municipality's website for information about a public meeting rather than the newspaper. Municipalities will save time and money if allowed to use their website for public notices rather than placing the notice in the newspaper.

In its current form, LD 422 would provide municipalities with this alternative way to provide notice. However, it does not provide that same alternative to quasi-municipal entities such as water or wastewater utilities. Like municipalities, quasi-municipal entities are subject to public notice requirements under statute. For this reason, if the Legislature does decide to move forward with this bill, our Association would ask that it be amended to include quasi-municipal entities.

Conclusion. Based on the foregoing, we write in qualified support of the bill, and urge the Committee to amend the language of LD 422 to include quasi-municipal entities.

Sincerely,

Roger Crouse
Chair, MWUA Legislative & Regulatory Committee
General Manager, Kennebec Water District

cc: Bruce Berger, Executive Director
James I. Cohen, Verrill Dana, LLP, Legislative Counsel