



Maine Municipal
Association

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**Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association
In Support of
*LD 1022, An Act to Allow School Budget Referenda on the Same Day as Primary Elections***

March 22, 2023

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica and members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee, my name is Rebecca Lambert, and I am providing testimony in support of LD 1022 on behalf of the Maine Municipal Association's (MMA) elected 70-member Legislative Policy Committee (LPC). For reference, the LPC provides direction to the advocacy team at MMA and establishes the position on bills of municipal interest.

First and foremost, MMA would like to thank Rep. Arata for sponsoring this bill, which was advanced by the LPC.

MMA advocates tirelessly for our members and partners, especially when it comes to streamlining service delivery in an efficient and cost-effective manner that causes no harm to the property taxpayer. LD 1022, as proposed, would put into place the steps necessary to ensure that the school budget referendum elections, required in state law, occur on the date scheduled for the June primary election, or the second Tuesday in June when a primary election is not scheduled to take place.

By making this change, municipalities would mitigate the need for an additional off-cycle election, for which the costs ultimately fall to property taxpayers. Not only would this help reduce costs on already strapped municipal budgets but would also preserve the very limited human resources involved, as elections are conducted in a large part by volunteers.

Communities' volunteer pools are dwindling, and local leaders are finding it more difficult to attract individuals who are willing to donate a large portion of their time needed to issue, collect and count ballots. Reducing the number of elections that a municipality must conduct in a given year would be helpful to the municipal budget that would further extend to the property taxpayer.

The Maine School Board Association has expressed concern that the figures needed from the State to produce an accurate budget for consideration by its citizens, are not always available in time for the election. The LPC recognizes and appreciates the need for accurate figures to create a sustainable budget, especially where a large portion of a municipal budget is directed to fund public education. In support of this concern, MMA would propose a friendly amendment that would, in the case where the figures are not available from the State in time for the June primary election or the second Tuesday in June, requiring the state to reimburse municipalities for those costs.

For these reasons, the LPC supports the passage of LD 1022. Thank you for your time and for considering the municipal perspective on this issue.