

Douglas Farnham
Major General
Commissioner
(207) 430-6000



David A. Richmond
Director
(207) 287-7020

Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management

Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services

117 State House Station, Augusta, Maine 04333-0117
Phone (207) 287-7020 Fax (207) 626-4471

March 24, 2023

Nether for nor against:

LD 1233, "An Act Regarding the Maine State Cemetery Preservation Commission" Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government. I'm David Richmond, Director of the Bureau of Veterans' Services and I'm here today to testify neither for nor against LD 1233, An Act Regarding the Maine State Cemetery Preservation Commission.

The Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services is a state agency and acts as Maine's lead veterans advocate, dedicated to providing assistance and support to Maine veterans and their families; doing so through Veterans Service Officers and assistants who file claims and advocate for veterans before the VA, through financial assistance programs and other state benefit programs, navigating education benefits, employment assistance, addressing housing and homelessness, and maintaining and operating the State's four veterans' cemeteries, located in Caribou, Springvale, and two in Augusta.

Per current statute, the responsibility of the Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services is limited to providing a meeting space with the ability to include representation as a member to the Maine State Cemetery Preservation Commission.

While we are not opposed to the mission of the commission or anything currently proposed in this bill, we are concerned with the possibility of expanded responsibilities that may be considered or assigned to our department or bureau--that aren't related to veteran advocacy or the mission of the Bureau. We feel strongly that the missions of the commission and our bureau do not align and we would respectfully oppose any growth or involvement beyond our current role regardless of increased funding or staff for this commission.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully Submitted,

David Richmond
Director, Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services