



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002
(207) 287-1400
TTY: MAINE RELAY 711

Melanie Sachs

84 Kelsey Ridge Road
Freeport, ME 04032
Residence: 207-299-6825
Melanie.Sachs@legislature.maine.gov

May 25, 2023

Testimony of Representative Melanie Sachs, sponsor of

LD 1934, Resolve, to Improve the Coordination and Delivery of Planning Grants and Technical Assistance to Communities in Maine

Before the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government

Good afternoon, Senator Nangle, Representative Stover and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government. My name is Melanie Sachs and I represent House District 102, which includes Freeport. I am honored to submit this testimony in support of **LD 1934, Resolve, to Improve the Coordination and Delivery of Planning Grants and Technical Assistance to Communities in Maine.**

Members of this committee are very familiar with the challenges Maine communities are facing as they manage multiple complex issues with limited resources and staff capacity. From affordable housing and managing growth to planning for climate change and providing essential community services, communities are navigating critical challenges.

State agencies can provide programs and assistance to our cities and towns, but it is not always clear how to access them, and local public officials must navigate multiple state agencies and staff and websites to find the support and technical assistance they need. I had the honor of serving as a Town Councilor for many years in Freeport and know firsthand how challenging it was for our excellent and dedicated town staff to identify, apply for and manage those opportunities. This can be especially overwhelming for our smaller communities.

We are also experiencing a time of unprecedented opportunity for federal support for infrastructure rebuilding – from broadband access to community downtowns to our energy infrastructure. While municipal staff and leaders are trying to stay on top of state programs and opportunities, competing for resources and meeting federal requirements is a daunting challenge. Greater state support at the regional and local level, as well as increased communication and coordination, could assist communities in competing for infrastructure grants.

This bill would direct the state, convened by the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future, to review how programs that assist communities with planning grants and technical assistance are delivered, and recommend changes to improve coordination and program delivery.

Importantly, this bill requires that municipalities and regional planning organizations be consulted as part of the process. I worked with municipalities of every size, and almost every regional planning organization in our state last session on a bill to establish the Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority, and I know that leveraging their collective experience is critical. The resulting plan will be actionable and will provide clear direction for better delivery of the state programs needed to support communities.

Maine has nearly 500 cities, towns and tribal governments. They are struggling to keep up with the increasing pace of change in our state, as well as the opportunities and challenges. It is essential that we consider the state role – and how we can work in partnership with communities, their leaders, and regional governments to strengthen their capacity. This resolve takes an important step in this direction, and I am hopeful this committee will agree.