



Maine Regional Planning Commissions and Council of Governments

Your partner in planning and community assistance

May 25, 2023

Joint Standing Committee on State & Local Government
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

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

Dear Sen. Nangle, Rep. Stover, and Committee members;

Please accept this letter as the testimony of the Maine Regional Planning Commissions and Councils in support of LD 1934, *Resolve, to Improve the Coordination and Delivery of Planning Grants and Technical Assistance to Communities in Maine*.

Regional Councils in Maine have a long history of providing direct technical assistance to its members community throughout all of Maine (see appendix A for further discussion). Every regional council in Maine is ready to work with the Office of Policy Innovation and the Future in examining ways to improve grant and technical assistance programs. Through our membership, councils can make a direct link with municipalities, as well as the many state and federal agencies we work with.

During this process, regional councils, through representation, can share ways to improve upon the coordination of many disparate state (and federal) agency programs, designing more cohesive state policies and funding delivery. LD 1934 provides an ideal vehicle for state agencies and regional organizations to work together to forge more consistent partnerships in state and municipal policy development.

We look forward to working with GOPIF in the study and implementation of the findings that LD1934 provides.

Sincerely,

Amy Landry, Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments Lee
Umphrey, Eastern Maine Development Corporation Kristina Egan,
Greater Portland Council of Governments James Fisher, Hancock
County Planning Commission
Matt Underwood, Kennebec Valley Council of Governments
Mary Ellen Barnes, Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission
Mat Eddy, Midcoast Council of Governments
Bob Clark, Northern Maine Development Commission
Paul Schumacher, Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission Betsy Fitzgerald, Washington
County Council of Governments

Appendix A: Legislative Role for Regional Planning Commissions and Councils of Governments

We have provided past testimony to Maine legislative committees on changes in state funding support for Regional Council and Planning Commissions over the last 25 years. It is important, in the context of LD1934, to understand the state enabling legislation regarding regional planning organizations and the support we provide (taken from appropriate sections):

Title 30-A: MUNICIPALITIES AND COUNTIES,

§2321. Establishment; purposes

.....Purposes. The purposes of a regional planning commission are to:

A. Promote cooperative efforts toward regional development; [PL 1987, c. 737, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); PL 1987, c. 737, Pt. C, §106 (NEW); PL 1989, c. 6 (AMD); PL 1989, c. 9, §2 (AMD); PL 1989, c. 104, Pt. C, §§8, 10 (AMD).]

B. Prepare and maintain a comprehensive regional plan.

(1) The public must be given an adequate opportunity to be heard in the preparation of a comprehensive plan; [PL 2007, c. 215, §5 (AMD).]

C. Coordinate with state and federal planning and development programs; [PL 2007, c. 215, §5 (AMD).]

D. Provide planning assistance and advisory services to municipalities; and [PL 2007, c. 215, §5 (AMD).]

E. Provide programs and services to municipalities. [PL 200

§2326. Staff services

To avoid duplication of staffs for various regional bodies assisted by the Federal Government, a commission may provide basic administrative, research and planning services for any regional development and planning bodies established in this State.

§2341. Regional planning and development districts

1. Districts. The Governor may designate regional planning and development districts and subdistricts for the purpose of coordinating policies, plans and programs among and within the various levels of government affecting the development of those districts or subdistricts.

Most recently, municipalities have been given many more legislative responsibilities related to growth management, climate change, and housing issues. Regional Councils and Commissions, ideally suited to provide guidance and assistance in addressing these many issues, have not received equivalent support to work with our member communities. Along with existing enabling legislation, there is precedent for such support with the implementation of growth management program in the 1990-2000s. However, fundamental planning assistance funding declined and has remained flat for the past 10 years or so. Recent commitment to (through LD2003) housing assistance planning was the first change in funding support.

PLANNING FUNDS ADJUSTED TO 2022 DOLLARS

