

131st Legislature
Senate of
Maine
Senate District 2

Senator Harold 'Trey' Stewart
Senate Republican Leader
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**LD 1997, "An Act to Implement Critical Reforms to the
Department of Environmental Protection Outlined in the
State COVID-19 Reopening Plan"**

January 9, 2024

**Joint Standing Committee on
Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business**

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business:

I am Senator Trey Stewart; and I represent District 2, which includes several municipalities in Aroostook and Penobscot Counties. I am here to offer LD 1997, "*An Act to Implement Critical Reforms to the Department of Environmental Protection Outlined in the State COVID-19 Reopening Plan.*"

I appreciate the opportunity to present this legislation today; and, as you will hear, it is one that intends to create more amenable conditions to spur investment and economic development across the state.

I am willing to bet that you, as a legislator, have heard from constituents who have relayed experiences of regulatory nightmares while trying to get a business off the ground or attempting to expand their venture. Let me share with you one about a substantial economic development investment in the Millinocket area. The business literally had to rent a U-Haul to transport dozens of boxes of paperwork to comply with the horrendous regulatory burden to be able to move forward with their project. This is simply unacceptable. There has to be a better way – especially is we want to attract business to this state.

It is my understanding that some recommendations of Maine's COVID-19 Reopening Plan were not implemented and my proposal would do just that with respect to modernizing our business regulatory environment. To quote from the Governor's Economic Recovery Committee's Recommendations To Sustain and Grow Maine's Economy dated November 24, 2020, "Maine should keep certain regulatory changes deployed in response to the crisis. Additionally, to ensure a smooth flow of new investments during recovery, the State should review and simplify permitting processes and move key components online."

The report also recommends investing in agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture infrastructure and innovation to foster innovation in food processing in Maine to complement the work of existing incubators, accelerators, and networks, and create added value in the state's natural resource industries.

I won't take the time to review with you all the highlights of the bill, which are stated in the summary; however, it is critical we simplify permitting processes and implement key components' online availability. Timely responses from state departments are crucial in order for investors to plan and be successful.

Thank you for your time and attention. I appreciate your thoughtful consideration.