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AMANDA E. BEAL
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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON STATE AND
LOCAL GOVERNMENT

NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST LD 1667

An Act Regarding Recommendations for Changing Place Names in the State

February 6, 2024

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Stephen Dickson, and I am the State Geologist and Director of the Maine Geological Survey (MGS). I am speaking on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF) Neither For Nor Against LD 1667, *An Act Regarding Recommendations for Changing Place Names in the State*.

This bill will create a Public Service Coordinator position to act as the State Names Authority in the Office of Information Technology. This is a significant position that is currently filled by a volunteer. Other states commonly have a state official who works with the U.S. Board on Geographic Names (a board located in the U.S. Department of Interior that maintains uniform geographic name usage at the federal level) to make name changes or to name new places in a manner consistent with state intentions and federal requirements.

The bill also creates a nine-member Maine Board on Place Names. One seat on the Board is held by the State Geologist from DACF. We support this appointment and look forward to participating. Over the past year, I have worked with the Place Justice Advisory Committee of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Tribal Populations to review other states' structures. A board of this size and representation is appropriate for the task of replacing place names that are recognized by the State of Maine as offensive pursuant to 1 MRSA §1101 and facilitating appropriate alternatives. The Board will help expedite the process of both removing offensive names and naming new locations known locally but not recognized at the federal level.

Thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions now or at the work session.

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