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AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002

(207) 287-1400

TTY: MAINE RELAY 711

Allison Hepler

417 Montsweag Rd.
Woolwich, ME 04579

Phone: (207) 319-4396

Allison.Hepler@legislature.maine.gov

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Testimony of Rep. Allison Hepler in support of
LD 646, An Act to Provide Appropriations and Allocations for the Operations of State Government
Before the Joint Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

Good afternoon, Sen. Rotundo, Rep. Sachs and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs. I am Allison Hepler and I represent the towns of Arrowsic, Georgetown, Phippsburg, West Bath and Woolwich. I am here today to speak in support of **LD 646, An Act to Provide Appropriations and Allocations for the Operations of State Government**.

Last fall, when the Woolwich selectboard – wearing my selectperson hat – was sitting with the auditor trying to set the mill rate to commit the town's property taxes, the question came up as to whether we could count on the state to fully refund the towns for the costs associated with the Property Tax Stabilization Act. A couple of phone calls and texts later, I was assured that funds in the biennial budget were sufficient to meet that obligation, and passed along that assurance to my fellow selectboard members. Please help me maintain my credibility on the selectboard.

This is also a chance for me to brag about Woolwich, where we were able to keep the mill rate flat for the third year in a row. As a result, the only reimbursements we were due were based on residents who, between 2023 and 2024, had applied for a Homestead Exemption. However, because our certified ratio had dropped – we are in the midst of a town-wide revaluation – those residents received the difference between the former ratio and the current ratio, for a total municipal reimbursement of about \$10,000. Woolwich's remaining reimbursement is small.

However, putting my legislator hat back on, I represent five rural towns and all of them have been counting on the state to make good on its promise, and to make good on it sooner rather than later. That's why LD 646 makes sense. Pass this bill unanimously as an emergency measure, so we can get the funding out to our cities and towns as quickly as possible. I'd like to add that this bill has been a hardship on our small towns, with part-time staff working hard collecting the paperwork on behalf of the residents they work for. Let's make it right for them.

Thank you for your time.