



February 3, 2025

Matthew Eddy

Testimony in a Joint Public Hearing to the:

Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

Chairs: Peggy Rotundo and Drew Gattine

Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic

Chairs: Traci Gere and Chip Curry

From the Maine Association of Regional Councils

The Maine Association of Regional Councils (MARC) is in full support of the further development of the Maine Office of Community Affairs (MOCA) and the financial support necessary to operate the agency. MARC has previously supported the efforts of the Governor's office to create and establish MOCA and the subsequent actions by the legislature to create the agency.

MARC is a representative organization of statewide Regional Planning Commissions and Councils. ¹ Each regional organization is statutorily driven: *...to assist in the development of technical capacities of local governments; to develop regional policies, services and solutions to meet local needs; and to serve as a vital link between local governments and the State (MRSA: Title 30-A, Part 2, Chapter 119, §2256)*. Each organization is membership driven, consisting of the participating municipalities in that region.

Having a single agency (MOCA) that centralizes guidance, funding opportunities, and support for municipalities increases the efficiency by which Regional Councils can serve their member communities. Creating a platform for direct discussion between towns, the regions and the State will improve overall communication. After a number of years of decline (for a variety of reasons), the state partnership with regional organizations is poised for improvement. The empowerment of MOCA will create more opportunities to help

¹ Each of these organizations is part of territories that also encompass the 7 Economic Development Districts, also covering the entire state. Other jurisdictional boundaries apply as well.



communities with overall planning needs as MOCA and MARC coordinate communication, creating a flow of information to and from our municipalities.

Specifically, we are in support of:

- The Part D of the budget that moves 7 existing programs to MOCA, bringing together staff who currently serve communities so the state can provide better service by collaborating across programs.
- Existing positions, both permanent and temporary, that are moving over to MOCA in support of the program, as well as the positions to support the office with financial management, contracts, and reception services.
- Moving the Development Ready Advisory Committee from the Redevelopment Land Bank to MOCA and adjust the membership and mission. This shift will provide a forum to convene key players, both inside and outside state government, including regional councils, to align policy and produce consistent, easy-to-use technical assistance for communities.
- The coordination of work between state and regional organizations that reduces the administrative burden on municipalities and regional councils, expanding the value of grant dollars reaching the community. The creation of a “one stop shop” that streamlines this process will enable more efficient work at the regional and municipal level.

We are excited by what we have experienced with Samantha Horn in these past months and look forward to participating with MOCA as we raise the bar on state, regional and local “collaboration”.