



## Testimony in Support of LD185

February 5, 2025

Senator Nicole Grohoski, Chair  
Representative Kristen Cloutier, Chair  
Members of the Taxation Committee

My name is Keith McBride and I am the Executive Director of the Sanford Regional Economic Growth Council. We bring sustainable economic growth to the City of Sanford which increases the city's tax base, improves quality of life, promotes business retention and expansion, fosters high quality jobs and capitalizes on public-private partnerships to achieve these goals.

Of particular importance in this mission statement is its emphasis on public-private partnerships. Our job is to attract private investment to Sanford that meets our priorities for commercial and industrial development, downtown and mill redevelopment and housing, among others. We do this by being table-setters: making sure that the figurative (and sometimes literal) landscape in Sanford is in the best possible condition for the private sector to succeed.

The most common inquiry we receive from businesses interested in locating in Sanford is about the community itself. Businesses know that no two communities are the same, and that comparing them by mill rate doesn't tell half of the story. They want to know what sets us apart. They ask about municipal services, about the quality of life, about schools, about the workforce, and about housing opportunities for their employees.

Part of the reason for this inquiry is to understand the priorities of the community they are considering joining: Does this community care about the environment? Do they value open space, parks and trails? Do they invest in child care? Workforce development? Affordable Housing? Wildlife and marine resources? Downtown amenities? Broadband infrastructure? And, of course, public safety.

All of these are eligible uses for TIF funds under our current statute, because the statute recognizes the connection between the table-setting work that we do in economic development, and the impact of showing that the community has invested in its environment, in recreational trails, in workforce development, in affordable housing, in a walkable and attractive downtown, in broadband, and in public safety.

And yet, of all these, only "construction or operation of public safety related to economic development" is limited under our current law to a certain percentage.

Our City Manager and Fire Chief will (or have already) spoken to you today about the need for fire stations in Sanford, and that our need is not unique among Maine communities. New OSHA regulations will cause municipalities to scramble to make their fire stations compliant. Our concern is that it is a problem that we could not have foreseen, and now we will be left to solve it on our own.

Sanford has a competitive advantage in southern Maine, in that we have a growing and thriving industrial sector, a well-trained workforce (thanks to investments and partnerships with educational institutions like the Sanford Regional Technical Center and York County Community College) and that we have large tracts of land available for new industrial development. We have an Industrial Development Corporation who is working (with private money, not publicly funded) to continue expanding Sanford's industrial sector. We have almost 100 acres of land being prepared right now for new industrial development, and over 1200 acres zoned for this use, and awaiting the arrival of critical infrastructure to be "shovel-ready." We are also working on projects that amount to hundreds of millions of dollars in new industrial investment in Sanford. Right now. Today. We have set the table.

We are at risk of losing ground, though. The next time a business or developer comes to Sanford and asks some of those critical questions that we know they always ask, we are at risk of not being able to say that we have the public safety infrastructure to protect their investment.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak on LD185. I would encourage you to report favorably on its passage, as drafted.