



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002
(207) 287-1400
TTY: MAINE RELAY 711

Janice Dodge

17 Vine St

Belfast, ME 04915

Phone: (207) 338-1626

Janice.Dodge@legislature.maine.gov

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Testimony of Rep. Jan Dodge introducing

LD 50, An Act to Provide the Right of First Refusal to Towns in Which the University of Maine System and Similar Quasi-independent State Entities are Selling Property

Before the State and Local Government Committee

Good Morning, Chair Baldacci and Chair Salisbury. I am Jan Dodge, and I represent House District #39- Belfast, Northport and Belmont. I am before you today to present **LD 50, An Act to Provide the Right of First Refusal to Towns in Which the University of Maine System and Similar Quasi-independent State Entities are Selling Property**.

This bill does not present a new concept. The Law and Legislative Reference Library found there are examples of the State granting a municipality the right of first refusal when selling property. I believe municipalities should have the opportunity to purchase UMaine properties at fair market value.

For years, the Belfast region was one of only a few areas that did not host a University of Maine satellite or community college. This was particularly unfortunate as we were attempting to retrain area workers during our recovery from the loss of our chicken processing plants, sardine packing and shoe manufacturing industries!

Through a partnership between the University of Maine, Charles Cawley (CEO of MBNA) and public and private donors, the Hutchinson Center was built. For years it was the site of conferences, job fairs, city-wide citizen meetings, Belfast Senior College programs and classes, an MBA program for senior staff at MBNA and the University's academic offerings.

Recently, and after two very bumpy RFP processes, the building has been sold. The purchaser is the Waldo Community Action Partners. This transaction will allow the continuation of the center's education mission and preserve a Network Maine server/area communication hub located in the building.

In the 131st Legislative Session, Senator Curry and I sponsored a bill to facilitate the transfer of the Hutchinson property to the City of Belfast. Though the bill did not pass, the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee encouraged the University System to review its processes for the

disposal of real property, including the standards of communication with and involvement of the communities that are affected by the decision as well as taking steps to preserve its relationship with the many Maine communities in which the System has a presence.

As one of our state's largest economic drivers, the actions by the University System and other quasi-independent state entities have an amplified influence in the cities and towns where they own property and conduct operations. I hope you will support granting those municipalities the right of first refusal through passage of LD 50.

After consultation with our Economic Development Department in Belfast, as well as our City Manager, I would like to offer an amendment allowing 90 days rather than the 30 day language in the bill to allow time for town leaders to secure funding for these sorts of purchases. A copy of that amendment is included with my testimony.

Thank you. I will be happy to try to answer your questions.

LR#: 0113(02)
Sponsor: Representative Dodge
Drafted by: KKB
Date: 1/22/2025
New Title?: NO
Add Emergency?: NO

LD 50
Sponsor amendment

Amend the bill in Section 1 in new 5 MRSA §12025(3)(A) as follows (changes shaded):

- 3. Expiration of right.** A municipality's right of first refusal under subsection 1 expires if:
- A. The municipality fails to send a written notice to the quasi-independent state entity invoking the right of first refusal within ~~30~~ 90 days of the date that the municipality received a written notice that complies with the requirements of subsection 2; or**

SUMMARY

This amendment increases the number of days that a municipality has to send a written notice to the quasi-independent state entity invoking the right of first refusal from within 30 days to within 90 days of the date that the municipality received a written notice that complies with the requirements of first refusal.

Sponsor: Representative Dodge
Drafted by: KKB
Date: 2/7/2025
New Title?: NO
Add Emergency?: NO

LD 50
Sponsor's proposed amendment

Amend the bill in Section 1 in new 5 MRSA §12025(3)(A) as follows (changes shaded):

3. Expiration of right. A municipality's right of first refusal under subsection 1 expires if:

A. The municipality fails to send a written notice to the quasi-independent state entity invoking the right of first refusal within ~~30~~ 90 days of the date that the municipality received a written notice that complies with the requirements of subsection 2; or

SUMMARY

This amendment increases the number of days that a municipality has to send a written notice to the quasi-independent state entity invoking the right of first refusal from within 30 days to within 90 days of the date that the municipality received a written notice that complies with the requirements of first refusal.