



Department of the Secretary of State

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Secretary of State

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JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

TESTIMONY OF SHENNA BELLOWES, SECRETARY OF STATE

Testifying in Favor

L.D. 674, "An Act to Create a History Education and Learning Mobile Unit within the Maine State Archives"

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government; I am Shenna Bellows, Maine's Secretary of State. I am here to share my support for LD 674 and ask that you vote, "ought to pass."

The Maine State Archives mission is to preserve the permanent historical records of the state and to make them accessible to the public. The work of the Archives includes assisting other libraries, archives, and historical societies in preserving their collections and providing educational outreach to the same institutions, as well as to schools and other interested groups to further the knowledge of Maine's history. In the last year, the Archives has fielded 55 requests for these kinds of services. We expect these requests to both continue and to be augmented by Semiquincentennial programming over the next several years. As you know, the 250th anniversary presents a rare opportunity to share the whole history of our nation and to make further strides towards shaping a more perfect union. It also offers a chance to strengthen the history field, preparing it to thrive for decades to come, especially here in Maine.

While we support this bill, we would need the fiscal note updated to reflect the full cost of both manufacture of the mobile unit as well as the necessary staff to operate it. The BMV is currently manufacturing a mobile unit for \$410,000. We believe this project would require the same amount as a one-time cost for manufacture in the first year.

This, the corrected funding, would secure a branded 32-foot truck that would house the Archives programming and conservation materials, a small preservation lab, and exhibition space for documents deemed robust enough to travel. Two Archives staff members are also included in each year's costs to drive the vehicle and conduct programming.

Maine is the most sparsely populated state east of the Mississippi River. With a total land area of 33,215 sq miles, much of our population lives in rural areas making it difficult for some of our citizens to access state services. This mobile unit will provide perpetual opportunities to bring our programming and services to the more remote corners of Maine and reach those who cannot access the internet or visit the Archives in person. Investing in a mobile unit will serve our constituents where they need to be met.

In speaking to other state agencies and nonprofits that have implemented mobile learning units, we've learned that once offered, such services become more and more frequently requested, which boosts trust and amplifies the work of the institution. And we know from decades of public history

research, that people who are connected to their history are more engaged citizens and more involved in their communities.

We strongly recommend the purchase and implementation of this new mobile unit. This concludes my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions or get additional information to the Committee ahead of the work session. Thank you for your time.

MAINE STATE ARCHIVES

is Moving Back to the Cultural Building

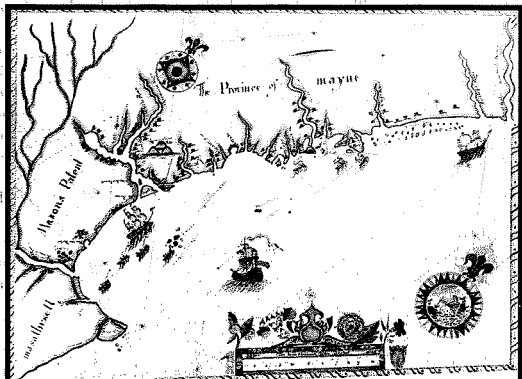


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Summer 2025

The Maine State Archives Serves YOU!

As stewards of Maine's history, we:

- collect and preserve important government records
- retain documents for other agencies and ensure they are kept or destroyed per agency policy
- help agencies access their old records
- train records managers to navigate our digital repository and learn record keeping best practices
- assist researchers, students, genealogists, legislators, and the public with queries related to Maine history



- provide grant funds that support archival preservation and material
- digitize photographs, maps, and documents for better accessibility
- digitize microfilm—and convert digital material to microfilm
- maintain a repository for digitized and digital-born information for governmental and public use
- support historical societies and cultural agencies in Maine
- facilitate field trips, lectures, and outreach programs across the state

Follow us on social media for stories about Maine History and updates about our move!

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