

**LD 389, "Resolve, to Increase Transparency and Evaluate Emergency Response Through a COVID-19 Review Commission"**

**Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services**  
**March 24, 2025**

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

I am Trey Stewart; and I represent Senate District 2, which includes several communities in Penobscot and Aroostook Counties. I am here today to present LD 389, "Resolve, to Increase Transparency and Evaluate Emergency Response Through a COVID-19 Review Commission."

Those of you who sat on this panel last session may recall a proposal brought forth by former Senator Lisa Keim. That bill received unanimous support in both the Senate and House of Representatives prior to it being placed on the Special Study Table, where it remained until the Legislature adjourned.

My attempt at resurrecting this commonsense measure is a good faith effort at ensuring public health and safety, legislative oversight and involvement and, most of all, transparency. This measure would establish the COVID-19 Commission to review and study the State's response to COVID-19 and report back to this Committee no later than December 3<sup>rd</sup> of this year. The review will encompass many different areas including state law, the Governor's proclamations and executive orders and rules and policies implemented by various agencies, including the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Education, the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management, Maine Emergency Management Agency and the Department of Economic and Community Development.

What harm is there in reviewing the State's response to a never-before-seen worldwide pandemic? This universal crisis seemed to come out of nowhere and every day brought new fears and trepidation. Those of you who were serving in the Legislature back then must admit that we, as members, were not involved at all with decision-making on how to proceed and protect Maine citizens.

As time ticks on and we move further and further away from the perils of the 15-month long state of civil emergency that began in 2021, I'm afraid the devastating impacts and lessons will diminish. We must not forget. We must act now. When will the next pandemic appear? We

need to be prepared. You and I may not be here and we need to protect future generations. Learning from what may have gone wrong and capitalizing on what went right is imperative.

Every citizen was dramatically affected by COVID-19 – sickness, death, school closures, struggling students, depression, mental health decline, addiction, isolation, business closures, workforce shortages. No one was spared. To be able to look back and examine the protocols will not only better prepare the state for the future, but a review will also build confidence and trust in our state government.

Thank you for your time and attention.