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THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

Testimony of Senator Nicole Grohoski
LD 954, "An Act to Amend the Law Governing the Membership of the
Government Oversight Committee"

Before the Committee on State and Local Government
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Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and Esteemed Members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Nicole Grohoski, and I proudly represent Senate District 7, which includes 22 coastal communities in Downeast Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on LD 954, "An Act to Amend the Law Governing the Membership of the Government Oversight Committee."

I am testifying neither for nor against this bill in order to provide context for the origin of the membership requirements for the Government Oversight Committee (GOC) that this bill seeks to eliminate.

As a reminder, the GOC has 12 members: 3 Senate Democrats, 3 Senate Republicans, 3 House Democrats, and 3 House Republicans. The law currently requires GOC to have 1 member who is also on the Taxation Committee (TAX) and one member who is also on the Housing and Economic Development Committee (HED). Further, it requires that no 2 members of the committee may serve on the same policy committee and be in the same political party.

These requirements were established by LD 849 in the 131st Legislature: "An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Working Group to Review the Process for Ongoing Review of Tax Expenditures by the Legislature." I was not part of the working group¹ nor have I done a deep dive on its proceedings, but this bill came before the Taxation Committee, which I co-chair.

The working group originally recommended that 2 members of GOC also serve on TAX and 1 on HED. TAX felt that our policy area did not need that level of representation on GOC to serve as an effective bridge between the committees for the tax expenditure review process. However, we felt that having a broad range of policy committee expertise on GOC could help inform the

¹ <https://www.legislature.maine.gov/ofpr/tax-expenditure-review-working-group>

Legislature's policy work on areas of concern. During the 131st, GOC was comprised of 4 members of AFA and 2 members of leadership, meaning half of its members were not actively engaged in policy committee work.

This bill allows the Legislature to have an important conversation about how to best "staff" the Government Oversight Committee, which has a significant role to play in the Legislature's oversight of the Executive Branch. I'm disappointed that this bill proposes to remove the requirement to have a diversity of committee expertise on GOC before we get to see how effective the idea was.

The decision to remove membership requirements for one TAX and one HED member should be considered in conjunction with LD 136, "An Act to Transfer the Responsibility for Tax Expenditure Review from the Government Oversight Committee to the Joint Standing Committee on Taxation." If that bill is passed, it makes sense to remove the related GOC membership requirements. If it is not passed, then I think it would be prudent to at least retain that part of statute. In my experience on TAX, the tax expenditure review process hand-off between GOC and TAX has not been very effective, but we hope that with members now bridging both committees, we might improve it.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions.