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Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

Neither For Nor Against

LD 1340 -An Act to Establish the Municipal Stream Crossing Fund

April 11, 2025

Sen. Nangle, Rep. Crafts, and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee, my name is Rebecca Graham, and I am submitting placeholder testimony neither for nor against LD 1340 as our Legislative Policy Committee (LPC) has not yet met to establish an official position on this bill. If the committee has not held a work session on this bill before they have an opportunity to adopt a position next week, I will provide the committee with an official position at that time.

Historically, our LPC supports funding mechanisms that provide grants to municipalities, and they are grateful for the existing programs through the Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Transportation's most recent effort. Consistent ongoing funding for these programs is key. This bill appears to make permanent the one-time funding grants most recently closed in 2024.

More generally, municipalities have shared their challenges with state and federal grants that require a partial match or expenditure of funds for technical review that is not reimbursable by the award simply to qualify for a granting opportunity. These barriers often leave small, occasionally staffed municipalities out of the mix as they often lack the resources to meet complex reporting requirements or have projects significant enough to attract engineering reviews. Additionally, sometimes they are unable to convince their legislative body that expending funds for a competitive opportunity that may not be realized is prudent. This may be helpful information for the committee if there is a desire to provide some guidance on routine and technical rulemaking.

Finally, finding granting opportunities across multiple departments with differing rules, notice of opportunity locations, and varying deadlines mean some municipal officials learn about opportunities only after they are closed. To this end, it may be beneficial for the committee to consider encouraging a new permanent granting opportunity to be integrated either by communication or process with the Maine Office of Community Affairs as the Association hopes this will be a central one stop knowledge resource for municipal government.

The Association thanks the sponsors and this committee for their efforts to address the state of municipal culverts with a permanent solution and appreciates the opportunity to provide some feedback on the municipal experience with grants more generally. Our LPC will meet next Wednesday, April 16 to review the bill and I will provide any position update at that time for any work session that may be held after.