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Senator, District 18

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

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**Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government on
LD 1546, An Act to Require Recommendations from Study Commissions to
Be Printed as Legislative Documents
April 28, 2025**

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government: I am Senator Rick Bennett of Oxford, and I have the honor of serving 14 communities in Western Maine in the State Senate. I am pleased to cosponsor both LD 1546, "An Act to Require Recommendations from Study Commissions to Be Printed as Legislative Documents."

The bill before you today is very simple and commonsense. It requires that when the legislature establishes a study commission to look into a specific matter and offer recommendations, those recommendations be printed as legislation and given a public hearing.

When the Legislature asks hardworking Mainers to give up their time and share their experience and expertise to solve our problems, we owe it to them to take their suggestions into consideration.

Last session, the Second Regular Session of the 131st Maine State Legislature considered LD 1722, *Resolve, to Establish the Blue Ribbon Commission to Design a Plan for Sustained Investment in Preventing Disease and Improving the Health of Maine Communities*. This legislation was unanimously reported out of the Health and Human Services Committee and passed unanimously by both chambers as an emergency Resolve, which became law. Of all the study proposals that came before the Legislative Council last session, this was one the studies that received support and funding from our legislative leaders, at an estimated cost of \$3,050. Many others died on the Special Study Table because they did not have the required funding.

Beyond this cost, the Legislature asked a group of intelligent and hardworking Mainers to give up hours of their time to serve on this Commission and release a report. The resolve set up a commission of 15 members from across the state to look at ways to save and improve the Fund for a Healthy Maine. My cosponsors on this bill—Senator Rotundo, Representative Ducharme and Representative Graham—and I filled in the slots of the four legislators on the Commission.

The eleven other members appointed to the Commission brought with them a broad range of experience in government, public health, nonprofit management, finance and other areas. Between October and December of 2023, the Commission met four times and developed answers to the questions with which they were charged, sacrificing hours of their time and unmatched expertise.

I understand that there may have been aspects of the Commission's report that were not popular with some of our colleagues or the Administration. However, that is precisely why we should hold public hearings on their work. The Commission's recommendations should have been reviewed by the public and the committee of jurisdiction.

Why do we ask people to serve on such a commission if we will just ignore their recommendations? What is the point of their work? Why should we waste our limited study funds if we just ignore their suggestions?

I do not see how we can continue to ask smart, hardworking Mainers to sacrifice their time to solving our state's problems if their recommendations may just be ignored and disregarded. By passing this measure, we will ensure a consistent handling by committees of such recommendations.

Thank you for your time. I encourage you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 1546.