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Testimony in Support of LD 1415

An Act to Expand Reporting Requirements for Legislators and Lobbyists

Good Afternoon Senator Hickman, Representative Supica and members of the Committee on Veteran and Legal Affairs

I am Debra Plowman and I live in Hampden, Maine and I am here to give testimony in support of LD 1415.

20 years ago I was appointed to this committee and served all 8 years in the senate on this committee. As you can imagine, many bills came before this committee during those 8 years - resulting in many of the reporting requirements that exist to this day and many of which have been expanded to recognize how important disclosure and transparency are to the world outside of the state house.

In full disclosure, I approached Senator Haggan to submit this legislation for your consideration. I have drafted the bill before you after extensive research into how other states have approached the transparency of "behests" or "requests" by an elected official to an individual or organization. While some states outright prohibit this practice, others address the issue by requiring that the behest be reported by the elected official and the individual or organization making the contribution. This bill chooses the latter option with the intent of providing the transparency in the transaction to ensure that full confidence in the legislator and the legislative process is readily apparent to the everyday citizen of Maine. While "owning" the fact that I drafted the bill, I have always believed that the best legislation is not readily achieved without debate or question but rather with it being fully vetted in committee.

You have surely discovered that much of what happens here is "inside baseball" and even our families struggle at the Thanksgiving table to understand the legislative process in committee or on the floor. What our fellow Mainers do understand is transparency and the confidence that transparency brings.

I would point out that the bill only addresses a behest by a lobbyist or lobbyist associate. Other states do not do so, instead requiring any donor to report a donation. The committee may want to explore enlarging the reporting requirement as other states have done.

Further, there is the possibility that a donor may choose to make the contribution anonymously leaving the elected official responsible for making the disclosure. Tracking the prevalence of any anonymous donors may reveal the need for further legislation.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill.