

Good morning, Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and Honorable Members of the Committee On State and Local Government.

My name is Alicia Collins. I represent the towns of Sidney and Vassalboro in District 61.

I am here to testify in favor of LD 1556 and LD 1884 – two bills which would give the people of Kennebec County the opportunity to elect 2 additional County Commissioners. Bringing the number of commissioners from three (3) to five (5).

Why more commissioners? Quorum, diversity, broader range of opinion, lower corruption, and workload distribution.

Quorum of our commissioners can be achieved if one commissioner goes to Wal-Mart and runs into another commissioner. Even if the two don't discuss county business, the public perception could be perceived as a quorum, raising public concerns about transparency.

The current make-up of the commission is 3 commissioners from communities with property valuations of more than 1 million dollars. The city of Augusta's valuation is more than 3 million, while the average valuation for the Kennebec County communities is less than \$600,000. We should have a more diverse commission, representing not only million-dollar cities, but the rural, less affluent areas.

In the same vein, more commissioners would bring varied backgrounds and opinions. Like our legislative committees, the policies created will be more balanced and well thought out.

A smaller commission lends to polarized decision making. It is easy for two members of any board to shut down the third member. 5 members would create an avenue for debate and compromise.

Finally, 5 members would spread the responsibilities of the commissioners, alleviating issues when one member is sick, or on vacation, or can't make it to meetings for whatever reason.

Having more than 3 commissioners is not unusual in Maine. In our 16 counties, 5 counties already have 5 or more commissioners. Androscoggin County has 10,000 fewer residents; however, their county commission is comprised of 7 members.

Similarly, having more than 3 members on a selectboard, or city council, is not unusual in Kennebec County. Of the 30 communities in the county, more than half of them have boards comprised of 5 to 7 members.

The beautiful thing about this bill is it puts the decision to expand the commission in the hands of the voters of Kennebec County.

Please, vote ought to pass on LD 1556 and LD 1884.

Thank you for your time today.