

Good morning, Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government. My name is Matthew Boucher, Kennebec County Register of Deeds on of the elected Kennebec County Officers. I am here to support LD 1884.

In recent years, Kennebec County has frequently appeared in central Maine newspapers due to budget challenges and issues like jail funding. Constituents often ask me about county operations, our processes, and how they can make their voices heard.

Our county commissioners do an excellent job, but it's striking that Kennebec County's governing body consists of just three individuals. By comparison, I served on a city council with seven members, and even many of our smallest communities five-member boards. Franklin County recently expanded its commission from three to five.

LD 1884 proposes adding two commissioners to the Kennebec County Commission, enhancing representation for our citizens. When Kennebec County was founded in 1799, its population was approximately 24,000. Today, with 127,259 residents, each commissioner represents about 42,000 people and numerous towns.

Current public access and meeting laws further complicate matters. With a three-member commission, two commissioners cannot legally discuss county business without violating these laws, forcing reliance on intermediaries. Adding two commissioners would improve communication among commissioners, with citizens, and with municipal governments, strengthening democratic principles.

Best of all, if passed, LD 1884 simply allows Kennebec County residents to vote on expanding their commission. There's no better way to decide representation than through the ballot box. This will allow for a robust public conversation, and if the citizens of Kennebec want more representation, they will vote in favor of the referendum.

I urge this committee to support LD 1884, which would empower Kennebec County citizens to shape their representation. Thank you.

Matthew Boucher - Kennebec County Register of Deeds