

**Testimony by Knox County Commissioner Morgan Hynd in Support of LD 2158:
An Act to Address Vacancies on the Knox County Budget Committee**

**Committee on State and Local Government
January 28, 2026**

Good afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and distinguished members of the Committee on State and Local Government. My name is Morgan Hynd and I am one of three Knox County Commissioners. I represent the towns of Washington, Union, Warren, Cushing, Friendship, and Appleton. I am here to speak in support of LD 2158.

I'd like to start by explaining how Knox County came to require this emergency legislation. As we approached the beginning of Knox County's budget process in October of 2025, the County's administrative staff realized that we would be unable to convene the Budget Committee due to the lack of a quorum. Our County Charter requires us to have a quorum to approve new members for the Budget Committee. Because no one had run in the general election for any of the open seats, we only had four active members, one short of a quorum. Despite all of the towns providing nominations to fill those empty seats by October, we had no legal way to approve those nominations.

After seeking the counsel of the Secretary of State, the Attorney General, and our own legal counsel, we determined that the only legal path forward was through emergency legislation that would allow the County Commissioners to approve one of the five open seats, thereby giving the Budget Committee the quorum needed to approve the remaining four seats.

LD 2158 will sunset on April 1, 2029 which gives Knox County time to review and possibly amend its charter to avoid this situation in the future. This date also carries us through the 2028 election cycle, should we find ourselves in the same position again. That said, county administration and all of our municipalities are now keenly aware of the need to avoid this situation in the future and will do all we can to fill the seats through the election process moving forward.

Knox County is currently operating under our 2025 budget. This is significantly hampering the County's ability to function at full capacity, and the consequences will become more acute if we are not able to pass a 2026 budget. We are fortunate to have great leadership within the County, including our Finance Director who has worked closely with all departments to maintain critical functions, but we will likely have to consider more drastic cuts without the support of the Legislature. Our Sheriff is here today to tell you what that could mean for public safety. We have several other departments that will be impacted as well, including the Register of Deeds, Probate, the District Attorney's office, the Knox County Regional Airport, and more.

The passage of this emergency legislation is critical to the functioning of Knox County for the remainder of 2026 and for several years ahead. If passed, Knox County will immediately proceed with our budget process, which will bring relief to our loyal staff, some of whom have worked at the County for decades. It will also bring stability to our 18 municipal partners, and most importantly to the taxpayers. I respectfully ask that you approve LD 2158 in support of functional government at the county level.