



**MAINE MUNICIPAL  
ASSOCIATION SINCE 1936**

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Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

**Neither For nor Against Part A, Z 396**

*LD 2212 - An Act Making Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2026, and June 30, 2027*

February 19, 2026

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and distinguished members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee; Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and distinguished members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee, my name is Tanya Emery. I am providing testimony today on behalf of the Maine Municipal Association's (MMA) elected 70-member Legislative Policy Committee (LPC). MMA's LPC is neither for nor against Part A, Z 396, which would provide funding for a partnership program to support municipalities in assessing and potentially using artificial intelligence, including grants and technical assistance with a focus on housing permitting and cybersecurity.

Many communities are already exploring and implementing ways to use AI to improve efficiency, strengthen cybersecurity, and manage workloads, particularly in permitting and code enforcement. Thoughtful, voluntary state support can be helpful. Our primary concern is ensuring that this proposal respects Maine's strong tradition of municipal home rule.

Local governments are directly accountable to their residents for how they deliver services, how they spend funds, and how they adopt innovative technologies. Decisions about whether and how to implement AI tools involve local budget capacity, staffing levels, community priorities, data privacy considerations, and risk tolerance.

MMA's concern is not with grants or technical assistance themselves. Voluntary resources such as toolkits and training can be highly beneficial. Our concern arises if a partnership program were to become prescriptive, particularly if funding were tied to new expectations or state direction over local permitting practices.

The proposal references expedited permitting for housing development. Municipalities share the goal of timely and predictable permitting at all levels of government. However, land use decisions and ordinance interpretation are inherently local responsibilities. Any AI tools offered to assist with workflow improvements must not supplant local authority or judgment. Cybersecurity support is an area where many municipalities would welcome voluntary assistance, provided it does not come with new mandates.

MMA urges careful drafting to ensure that this initiative strengthens municipal capacity without diminishing municipal autonomy. We stand ready to assist with any program development or design as a critical stakeholder if this measure should pass. Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

**In Support of Part A, Z419**

and

**Neither For nor Against Parts T-20 and T-21**

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February 19, 2026

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and distinguished members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee; Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and distinguished members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee, my name is Tanya Emery. I am providing testimony today on behalf of the Maine Municipal Association's (MMA) elected 70-member Legislative Policy Committee.

MMA's LPC is in strong support of Part A, Z 419, which would establish a Resource Management Coordinator within the Division of Building Codes and Standards and provide funding for training and support for local Code Enforcement Officers (CEOs), and neither for nor against Sections T-20 and T-21 which propose funding for a three-year pilot project to provide regionalized building code enforcement. While we appreciate the intent behind the latter proposal, we believe municipalities need sustained state support and coordination — not a pilot program to study models already in practice.

Well-trained Code Enforcement Officers are essential to safe construction, public health, and timely, predictable permitting of housing and other development. As Maine works to address housing challenges, the importance of professional, well-supported local code enforcement cannot be overstated.

The proposed Resource Management Coordinator position would strengthen existing municipal capacity, improve consistency statewide, and support the housing production goals shared by both the Legislature and municipalities. Importantly, this initiative invests in infrastructure that benefits every municipality — rural, suburban, and urban alike — without imposing structural changes on local government.

With respect to the proposed three-year, \$1 million pilot project to provide regionalized code enforcement, MMA's LPC is neither for nor against this concept. Regionalization is not new in Maine. Many municipalities already share CEOs, contract jointly, or participate in informal and formal regional arrangements. In some areas, regional models have proven effective in stabilizing employment and providing more consistent service to the public.



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However, municipalities are already exploring and implementing these approaches where they make sense. The barrier to further regionalization is a lack of sustained resources, training support, and administrative coordination. From the municipal perspective, there are more immediate and statewide needs, such as consistent training infrastructure, professional support and coordination, recruitment and retention assistance, and state-level technical expertise.

A pilot program may demonstrate what municipalities already know: that regionalization can work in certain contexts. One-time funding is not the solution to this problem.

In short, municipalities need sustained support and resources — not another study of models already operating at the local and regional level. Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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