



Maine Municipal
Association

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Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

Neither for Nor Against

LD 242- An Act To Support the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission
February 22, 2021

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, my name is Rebecca Graham, and I am providing testimony neither for nor against LD 242 on behalf of MMA's Legislative Policy Committee.

MMA's Legislative Policy Committee would like to review the final language of this draft bill before taking a firm position on the legislation but supports the concept inferred with the bill's description. In speaking with the sponsor, we understand the bill's intent is to lift a sunset clause for the funding of fire training facilities around Maine in current law.

Municipal officials struggle to find and recruit staff for Maine fire departments, which are overwhelmingly volunteer in nature and unavailable during typical working hours.

Additionally, recent changes to Maine's environmental laws have dramatically shifted the availability for communities to train their volunteers to an adequate standard in preparation for a structure fire. Previously, communities sought training opportunities that matched a property owner's demolition plans using the building for a live fire training opportunity for the surrounding fire departments.

With recent environmental rule changes to the acceptable levels of ground contamination of polyfluoroalkyl, substances known commonly as PFAS and PFOA, live fire training through the historic method creates toxic waste that potentially contaminates ground water and soils. While this substance is ubiquitous and prevalent in many of the items we use on a daily basis, elimination from water and ground sources is an enormous challenge and costing governments and individuals thousands of dollars.

Live fire training sites are extremely important, not only in preparing municipal fire volunteers for the realities of a structure fire, but also for environmental protection, and the safety of fire fighters. Municipal officials hope the resulting legislation will provide the opportunity to address this need beyond 2021.