



STATE OF MAINE  
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF POLICY INNOVATION AND THE FUTURE  
181 STATE HOUSE STATION  
AUGUSTA, MAINE  
04333-0181

**LD 1367 An Act To Create a Grant Program To Promote Innovation in  
Municipal Carbon Reduction Initiatives**

**Testimony**

**April 26, 2021**

Good morning Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, and members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources. My name is Brian Ambrette and I am the Senior Climate Resilience Coordinator in the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future. I am here today to testify Neither For Nor Against LD 1367, "An Act To Create a Grant Program To Promote Innovation in Municipal Carbon Reduction Initiatives".

In 2019, Governor Mills established the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GOPIF) to address critical, long-term issues facing Maine, by engaging state agencies, stakeholders and the public in the planning and implementation of innovative, data-driven policy solutions. The office's current leadership areas include: climate and energy policy, including the Maine Climate Council; opioid response and prevention; the Governor's Children's Cabinet, which focuses on education and childhood support policy; and economic innovation and workforce development policy. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the office also provided planning, policy, communications and technology support to the Governor and several state agencies, and managed the Governor's Economic Recovery Committee.

The December 1 climate action plan, *Maine Won't Wait*, highlights the opportunity for municipal "Lead by Example" energy efficiency and renewable energy projects and practices that can reduce both emissions and the operating costs. The plan calls for enhanced "grant and loan programs to support efficiency and renewable energy programs in municipal, tribal, school, and public-housing construction and improvements," as well as "recognition programs for those projects making outstanding efforts."

*Maine Won't Wait* also identifies lack of local capacity as a frequently cited reason that communities are unable to take action on climate change. The plan calls for empowering local and regional community resilience efforts, including state leadership for robust technical assistance and funding to communities by 2024 to support local and regional climate-resilience initiatives.

As my office testified on LD 446 An Act to Reestablish the State Planning Office, with the elimination of the former State Planning Office in 2012, there is not currently a single state government agency or office responsible to administer financial and technical assistance programs to help build sustainable communities. Some SPO programs were eliminated or significantly reduced; others were moved to different state agencies. Municipal planning assistance, for example, is now located at the Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry.

As demonstrated in the December 1 climate action plan *Maine Won't Wait*, we will need, over time, to expand resources to support communities to plan for and reduce their risks from climate change impacts. Lack of capacity, expertise, and funding are consistently cited by municipalities as reasons why they are not able to address their climate risks. In addition, towns have uneven access to planning

resources across the state to support other local planning issues, as evidenced in the attached chart which was part of the *Maine Won't Wait* report.

The plan recommends the state provide robust technical assistance and funding to communities by 2024 to support local and regional climate-resilience initiatives. This includes climate information, best practices, case studies, and funding resources to help towns understand climate risk, evaluate options, and prioritize actions; increased funds to incentivize regional resilience planning and cooperation and the inclusion of climate resilience in local and regional plans, regulations, and capital-investment plans; and encouragement and support for coordination among regional organizations, nonprofits, and the private-sector efforts, many of which are already providing important services and planning capacity for communities.

GOPIF is currently conducting a pilot project to work with 3 providers in communities across the state to do climate resilience planning and implementation. The purpose of the pilot project is to: 1) advance climate resilience planning and implementation in multiple towns representing the diversity of Maine people and regions; 2) demonstrate replicable engagement models for assisting communities that integrate three key functions: regional technical assistance, encouraging best practices, and funding support; and 3) inform the future development of key climate-related focus areas for communities, community resilience goals, and support for community resilience in Maine. As part of the pilot we are working with other state programs who used to be in the former State Planning Office, including the municipal planning assistance program (DACF) as well as the coastal program (DMR).

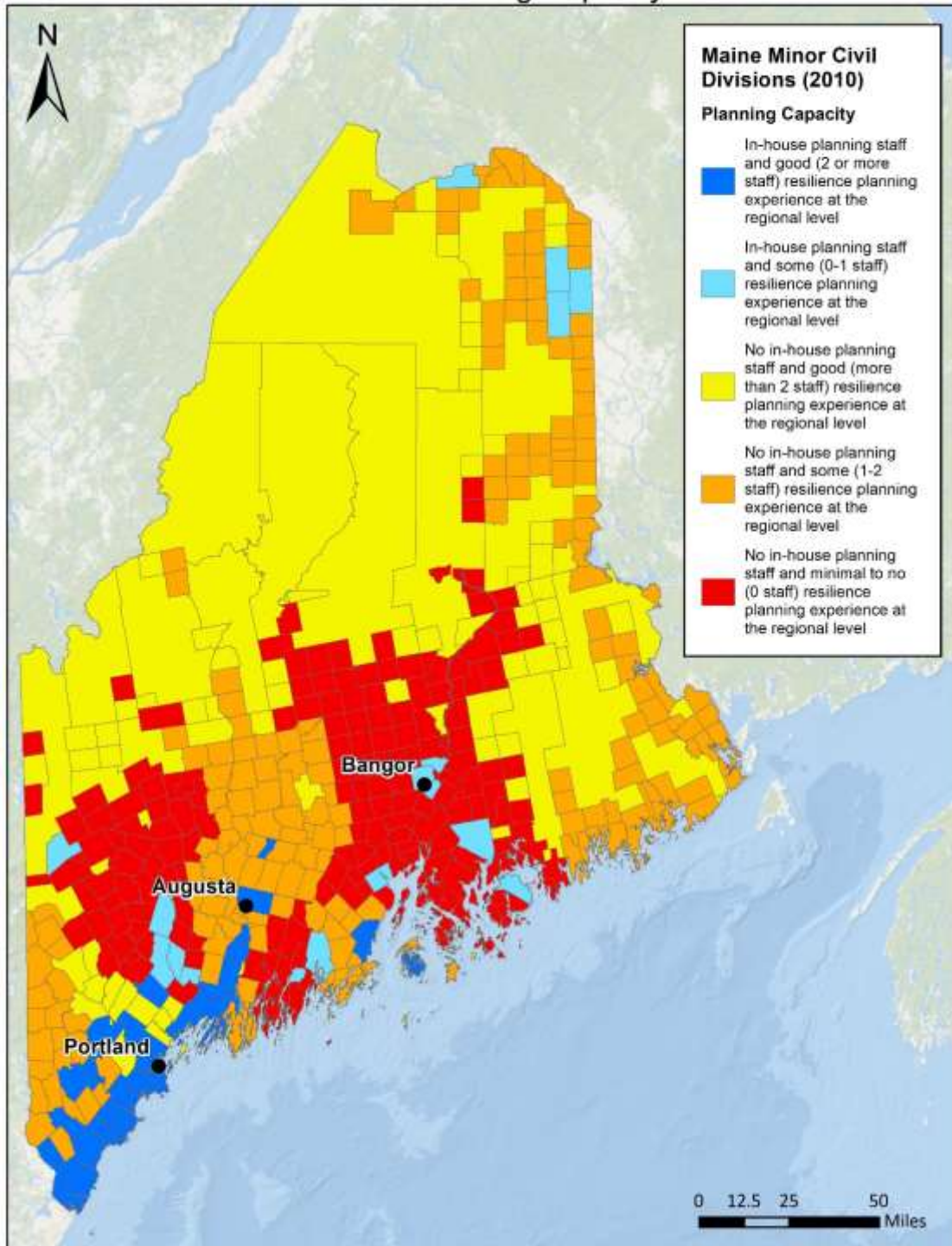
We believe that this bill, along with LD 446, are welcome opportunities to continue discussions about how the state could provide more robust municipal support to Maine communities in need. We believe the pilot project currently underway, to be completed by early 2022, will help provide further guidance to the state on how future support and resources may be best delivered.

The Maine Climate Action Plan calls for a broad approach to providing increased technical assistance and support for communities to achieve their climate goals – for both emissions reductions and resiliency projects. Over the course of the coming year, further evaluation of the former state planning positions and programs – now distributed to other state agencies – and emerging needs should be considered and the administration is also considering federal American Rescue Plan allocations that may support some municipal infrastructure, economic, and energy needs.

Thank you for your service and for the opportunity to testify today.

# Maine Minor Civil Divisions

## Resilience Planning Capacity



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