



Maine Municipal Association

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Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

Neither For Nor Against

LD 1429 – An Act To Implement the Most Time-sensitive Recommendations of the Maine Climate Council

May 17, 2021

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Neal Goldberg, and I am providing testimony neither for nor against LD 1429 on behalf of MMA's Legislative Policy Committee.

Expansive legislation like this is needed in order for fast action to achieve the recommendations of the Maine Climate Council. The Association supports Governor Mills' four-year climate action plan and views this bill as an extension of that plan. However, LD 1429 has too many components for municipal officials to agree on every recommendation individually. Instead, the policy committee would like to highlight sections that advance its top priorities.

The bill's funding for broadband infrastructure grant programs for expansion in rural areas is monumental. Private investment in densely populated areas occurs naturally in the marketplace, but in order for expansion in rural areas to happen the government needs to be involved. This Committee does not get enough opportunities to improve our state's broadband infrastructure and as such should strongly consider funding rural broadband expansion to the fullest extent possible. The Association has previously supported legislation that puts rural communities on the receiving end of state grants in order to get them caught up.

Early attempts to transition to low- or zero-emission vehicle fleets and installing charging infrastructure have been obstructed by entry costs. Even though the long-term savings are proven, upfront payment on electric vehicles and related infrastructure is too cost-prohibitive for municipalities to undertake alone. Local governments support the transition in theory, but need help in practice. A few weeks ago the Association offered testimony on LD 1579 before the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee, citing cost as the largest barrier to electrification of vehicle fleets. Similar to broadband infrastructure, this is a chance to advance a solution not frequently presented to this Committee.

Funding for Efficiency Maine Trust in general has popular support among the Association's members. Efficiency Maine has proven its ability to make significant impacts with its funding and should be given more opportunities to support communities. Of note, the weatherization and home heat-pump incentive and rebate programs are helpful for residents. The

savings these projects create are substantial for so many Mainers. And their benefit to environmental goals should never be overlooked.

Finally, the Association is interested in LD 1429's attempts to improve public transportation options and re-launching the GO MAINE ride matching program is a great first step. The bill also starts Maine on the path to catching up with the country in regards to public transportation funding, correcting the perception that Maine is not ripe for public transportation because it is largely rural.

This bill touches on many municipal issues. Please consider this testimony as the merits of each part of this bill are debated. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of these many important matters.