



**MAINE MUNICIPAL
ASSOCIATION SINCE 1936**

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Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

In Opposition to

LD 602- An Act to Provide Regional Support to Delivery State and Federal Programs to Cities and Towns in the State

January 9, 2024

Sen. Pierce, Rep. Gere, and distinguished members of the Housing Committee, my name is Rebecca Graham, and I am submitting testimony in opposition to LD 602 on behalf of Maine Municipal Association which represents the interests of municipal government before the state and federal government. The positions of the Association are formed at the direction of our 70-member Legislative Policy Committee, (LPC) who are elected by the selectboards and council of the municipalities in each of the 35 Senate districts in Maine. As a result, the positions represent a wide view of communities with varying resources, rural and urban, and those with ample local resources as well as those with none.

The differing access to regional resources and the continuously requested need for more support for those entities to assist with the historic technical support gap for planning is the reason that the Association and its 487 members were initially hopeful that the bill language would deliver on its ambitious title. Unfortunately, the amended version just seems to place in statute what the member-based organizations already do and are already provided authority to accomplish in the same section of statute without providing any additional resources for the task. The amended language fundamentally misunderstands how councils of government and regional planning commissions are created and who determines their activities and pays for the service.

The same applies to the new section under regional planning commissions. Not only does the language now mandate that both entities —where they exist— deliver non-member directed services unfunded, it also creates a conflict statute as to which organization is fulfilling this obligation for their member communities where they both exist. This is neither helpful for their member municipalities, nor addresses what each of these entities has been advising the legislature since the demise of the State Planning Office.

In mid-December, members of the Appropriations and State & Local Government Committees received a report from the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GOPIF), which was directed via the adoption of LD 1934, *Resolve, to Improve the Coordination and Delivery of Planning Grants and Technical Assistance to Communities in Maine*. A copy of the report can be found [here](#).

The report highlights that the entities have not received the funding sufficient to provide the aid municipalities need to implement state policy priorities and one of the key recommendations is to fund these entities more appropriately. This is the type of assistance that councils of governments and regional planning commissions need. Officials ask that you support the work that is already underway in LD 1934 instead of creating unnecessary language for activities that did not need statutory clarification.