



April 30, 2025

Honorable Anne Carney, Senate Chair
Honorable Amy Kuhn, House Chair
Joint Legislative Committee on Judiciary
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: Testimony in Opposition to LD 1683, An Act to Make a Freedom of Access Act Request Free of Charge upon Petition

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Members of the Committee on Judiciary:

The Maine Water Utilities Association (MWUA) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to LD 1683 which has the potential to transfer the cost of certain freedom of access act requests on to water ratepayers.

About MWUA. MWUA is a nonprofit association based in Augusta that provides support for water works professionals throughout the State of Maine in advocating for safe drinking water through educational and technical programming as well as advocacy on the local, state, and national level. The Association was formed in 1925 and consists of approximately 86 utility and 60 associate members. Maine's water utilities provide service to approximately 700,000 Maine residents, thousands of Maine businesses and public institutions, and millions of visitors to Maine every year.

Discussion. LD 1683 would require water utilities, and all public entities to provide access to public records for free if a petition is presented for a waiver of the fees signed by 150 people. It also requires an update on the status of a request for records at least every 30 days.

MWUA opposes this legislation because it is not needed. Requestors of public records already get two hours of free time in response to a request for public records. The ratepayers of utilities should not be required to bear the costs of responding to requests for public records; persons seeking the records should be responsible for the costs. Costs established by statute are reasonable and in fact don't adequately compensate public entities for the true costs of responding to request for records. In addition, providing an update on the status of a request every 30 days is administratively burdensome and uses the time of staff that could be utilized better responding to the request.

Conclusion. For these reasons, the Maine Water Utilities Association urges the Committee to vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 1683.

Thank you for your consideration,

Roger Crouse,
Chair, MWUA Legislative & Regulatory Affairs Committee

cc: James I. Cohen, Verrill Dana, LLP, Legislative Counsel