



CITY OF BANGOR

Judiciary Committee

Testimony on LD 1645 – “An Act to Improve Legislative Access to Public Information”

April 30, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee, I am Debbie Laurie, City Manager for the City of Bangor. On behalf of the Bangor City Council I am providing testimony on LD 1645 “An Act to Improve Legislative Access to Public Information”.

Maine’s Freedom of Access Act (FOAA) balances the right of our citizens and other interest parties to access public records. The Act also affords an avenue for relief if an individual believes their request has not been fulfilled properly, the Maine’s Public Access Ombudsman. We are committed to ensuring all actions of the City of Bangor remain transparent and accessible, as it is imperative to ensure our constituents have trust in our actions.

The City of Bangor receives and responds to nearly 2,000 FOAA requests every year. Most requests are simple and are able to be responded to immediately or within a matter of days, but many requests are broad and complex, requiring significant staff time to comply with to ensure the response is complete and free of protected information. The balanced enforcement mechanism within the existing FOAA statute allows us to fulfill our responsibility to transparency and public access as well as attend to our regular duties which includes serving our constituents daily.

Senator Tipping’s testimony discusses the frustrations legislators, journalists and members of the public have encountered in obtaining information they are entitled to in a timely manner. To our knowledge, none such delays were caused by requests for information from municipalities.

Ensuring legislators have the necessary tools to fulfill their elected roles is vital. Each level of government in Maine is subject to the same requirements and as such this bill, as currently printed, would apply to municipalities as well. We would respectfully request the Committee consider how to address their need to access information from state agencies in a timely manner without creating a similar requirement for municipalities, most of whom do not have dedicated resources to respond to FOAA requests.

Thank you for your consideration, and please do not hesitate to reach out with questions.

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