



Maine Municipal
Association

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Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

In Opposition to
LD 555, An Act To Expand the Rights of Public Sector Employees

January 19, 2022

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester and members of the Labor and Housing Committee, my name is Kate Dufour and I am providing testimony in opposition to LD 555 on behalf of MMA's Legislative Policy Committee.

Considering that property taxes and local fees fund 75% of mandated and desired municipal services, it is appropriate that existing state statutes hold public employees to a higher standard by preventing the ability to strike. The current policy creates an expectation of the delivery publicly-funded services without long-term interruption.

While we recognize LD 555 exempts from the right to strike certain municipal employees, the list is short. As proposed, the bill prevents law enforcement officers, firefighters, dispatchers, EMS personnel and first responders from engaging in a work stoppage.

However municipal officials and more importantly our residents and your constituents will argue that other services are equally necessary for the protection of public health and wellbeing. The maintenance of roads during winter storms allows for safe vehicle passage. The work accomplished at public works facilities ensures that water remains potable, and that wastewater is treated and disposed of appropriately. Employees of municipal airports ensure the safe departure and arrival of flights.

A widow needing a death certificate to file important legal and insurance paperwork might describe the services of municipal clerks as vital. State agencies that rely on tax collectors and treasurers to assess and remit fees to support state programs might also deem those activities as critical.

Municipal officials strongly urge you to oppose LD 555, thereby allowing – without the threat of strike – municipal leaders and employees to retain the authority to address labor issues, while simultaneously delivering and providing important public services.

Thank you for considering the municipal perspective on this issue.