



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002
(207) 287-1400
TTY: (207) 287-4469

Kyle R. Bailey

Cell Phone: 939-8600

Kyle.Bailey@legislature.maine.gov

March 3, 2021

**Testimony of Representative Kyle R. Bailey in Support of LD 446
Before the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government**

Sen. Baldacci, Rep. Matlack and distinguished members of the State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present LD 446, “An Act To Reestablish the State Planning Office.”

To recover from the global pandemic and recession, respond to demographic, climate, and opioid crises, reckon with centuries of injustice and ensure that we make our state an even better place to earn a living and raise a family, Maine’s executive and legislative branches must partner to:

- bring together leaders from across the state and political spectrum to engage in visioning;
- collaborate with municipalities, economic development corporations, land trusts, councils of government, regional planning commissions, and others stakeholders;
- provide expertise and resources to build-out and scale-up local and regional plans;
- incentivize innovation and make smart investments in physical and human capital; and,
- maintain bipartisan commitments across administrations and legislatures to implement plans that will solve Maine’s toughest challenges.

Thanks to the leadership of Gov. Mills and the hard work of Director Pingree and the Office of Policy Innovation and the Future, Commissioner Johnson and the Department of Economic and Community Development, the Economic Recovery Committee, and many individuals in the public, private and nonprofit sectors, Maine has an economic development strategy for the first time in many years. Thanks to the hard work of the Maine Climate Council, we have a strategy for addressing climate change. Under the leadership of Director Smith, we have a strategy to address the opioid crisis.

The development of these and other roadmaps are necessary first steps to building-out plans and scaling-up the work that will create opportunity and prosperity, improve quality of life, and ensure that we leave Maine a better place for our children and grandchildren.

(Continued on the next page)

The next step requires ensuring that our state has the infrastructure in place to fully engage in the extraordinary amount of planning and implementation work that needs to be done at all levels to ensure that we are successful in achieving our shared vision for a better future. The 186 members of the Maine Legislature must play an active role in this work to align state policies and budgets with our priorities, and collaborate with the executive branch to share responsibility for achieving better outcomes as a co-equal branch of government.

Change comes from the bottom up and not the top down. In many policy areas, our state can have its greatest impact by incentivizing innovation. There is a limit to how much progress the state can make without engaged and active participation from local communities.

I have introduced this legislation to recreate and reimagine the state's planning infrastructure because there is a deficiency in planning support for municipalities at the state level that threatens to undermine our best efforts to solve problems.

The State Planning Office, version 2.0, would operate as a *one-stop shop* for local governments and their partners to access planning expertise and resources; and, as a vehicle for the state to incentivize action at the local levels through the use *carrots, and not sticks*, to work towards statewide goals for growing Maine's economy and addressing climate change, among other planning priorities.

We know from experience that it is only when we collaborate with communities and incentivize the building-out and scaling-up of local and regional plans that we're able to address economic, demographic, climate, and health challenges.

The SPO 2.0, would exist differently from the 1.0 version. It would not exist as a bureaucratic agency to impose new regulations. On the contrary, it would exist to eliminate barriers and make state government resources accessible to communities. For rural areas and small towns that are presently under-resourced, the SPO 2.0 would provide the assistance that they presently lack to identify and compete for grants for downtown revitalization, infrastructure projects, carbon reduction initiatives, conservation preservation, and the like.

Throwing it against the wall and seeing what sticks and imposing new regulations and unfunded mandates are haphazard and counterintuitive, albeit well-intended, approaches to problem solving that most often fail to generate better outcomes. The SPO 2.0 will help us ensure solid planning, better implementation and improved incentives to bring about needed change.

I hope that sharing this vision for reinventing the State Planning Office is helpful in deliberating the merits of this proposal. I would like to thank the co-sponsors of LD 446, starting with the members of this Committee, Sen. Baldacci, Reps. Bryant, Copeland, Doore, Paulhus and Riseman, and also Reps. Warren, Harnett and Sachs. And, I would like to publicly thank the planners and advocates who I have spoken with over the past several months and who have informed my thinking on this issue, some of whom are here to testify today.