



## Maine Municipal Association

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### Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

#### Neither For Nor Against

#### *LD 446 - An Act To Reestablish the State Planning Office*

March 3, 2021

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Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack, members of the State and Local Government Committee, my name is Rebecca Graham and I am offering this testimony neither for nor against to LD 446 on behalf of the Maine Municipal Association at the direction of its statewide 70 member Legislative Policy Committee.

While the disillusionment of the State Planning Office removed a significant bank of resources for municipalities that are now spread across multiple entities, there was also a dramatic shift from being a resource to assist municipalities to a regulatory entity that often failed to weigh local capacity when approaching municipal planning needs.

That said, there is a significant need amongst the state departments who design rules and obligations that are carried out at the municipal level to have some sort of coordinating entity which will only become more important as the state rolls forward with Climate Council Recommendations.

The nexus of water and land regulation spread through multiple different departments within the state that rarely seem to communicate with each other is functionally delivered only at the municipal level. Water protection activities at municipalities must meet include regulation requirements between the Department of Environmental Protection land and water bureaus, and in some instances the Department of Marine Resources and Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, and Department of Transportation rules as well.

A single piece of land in a community can hit on the need to engage with each of these as well as the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry for tree cutting and historic preservation. Municipal officials spend tremendous amounts of often unpaid time trying to meet the obligations on the ground and would benefit from both a single point source for data but also cross-municipal collaboration between and inside departments at the state level.

To that end, officials ask that you use this bill as a vehicle to study the duties that were vacated with the disillusionment of the State Planning office and create a mechanism that support the nexus of where state rules meet the municipal road. Without these structures supported and in place to aid municipalities, the goals promoted for environmental protection and climate change preparation will be unachievable.