



Maine Municipal
Association

60 COMMUNITY DRIVE
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04330-9486
(207) 623-8428
www.memun.org

Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

In Opposition to LD 434

An Act To Clarify the Bonding Authority of Counties for Capital

Maintenance Projects

March 3, 2021

Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack, members of the State and Local Government Committee, my name is Rebecca Graham and I am offering this testimony in strong opposition to LD 434 on behalf of the Maine Municipal Association at the direction of its statewide 70 member Legislative Policy Committee.

No other level of government is less accountable to the voters than County government. Municipal officials must directly ask their taxpayers to support bonding measures regardless of their size, and County government should not be subjected to anything less than the restrictions placed on municipal government.

County governments have no tangible mechanism to act responsibly to their taxpayers and never face the firing squad of voters at a town meeting. County government statewide is split with a 50/50 approach to final budget authority with half of the counties subject to budget committee final authority and the other half subject to County Commissioner's final authority. At no point in the budget process does the county engage with the local communities that support them. They simply submit the final bill to those communities, many of which have their own services working in their interest which the County provides to other communities.

Municipal officials see no reason why the bonding process should be even less responsive to the taxpayer than the municipal bonding process and remain concerned that there is little to no authority for those paying individuals to shape how the County carries out its duties beyond a four year vote which is often run without opposition.

The referendum process is the only citizen vote on the fiscal management of county services. While municipal officials understand that many unfunded state mandates are fielded by County officials leaving little for capital projects, it never the less remains important that the

final payors of such services have direct input on the burdens such capital projects impose on the bill sent to their municipalities.

Additionally, such circumventing of the legislative processes further disguises the chronic underfunding of statewide services that Counties must assume due to lack of state investment in these facilities of statewide importance.

For all these reasons, municipal officials urge you to vote ought not to pass unanimously on LD 434.