



STATE OF MAINE
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF POLICY INNOVATION AND THE FUTURE
181 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
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LD 446 An Act to Reestablish the State Planning Office

Testimony Neither For Nor Against

March 3, 2021

Good morning Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack, members of the State and Local Government Committee. My name is Hannah Pingree, and I am the Director of the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future. I am here today to testify Neither For Nor Against LD 446, "An Act to Reestablish the State Planning Office."

In 2019, Governor Mills established the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GOPIF) to address critical, long-term issues facing Maine, by engaging state agencies, stakeholders and the public in the planning and implementation of innovative, data-driven policy solutions. The office's current leadership areas include: climate and energy policy, including the Maine Climate Council; opioid response and prevention; the Governor's Children's Cabinet, which focuses on education and childhood support policy; and economic innovation and workforce development policy. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the office also provided planning, policy, communications and technology support to the Governor and several state agencies, and managed the Governor's Economic Recovery Committee.

Governor Mills created GOPIF to do one of the three functions described in LD 446: advise the Governor on developing and implementing policy. To accomplish this work, GOPIF currently has 5 FTEs from the former State Planning Office.

The Office of Policy and Legal Analysis (OPLA) and the Office of Fiscal and Program Review (OFPR) exist to accomplish the second of the three functions described in LD 446: assist the Legislature with information and analysis.

With the elimination of the former State Planning Office in 2012, there is not currently a single state government agency or office responsible to conduct the third function described in LD 446: administer financial and technical assistance programs to help build sustainable communities. Some SPO programs were eliminated or significantly reduced; others were moved to different state agencies. Municipal planning assistance, for example, is now located at the Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry.

As demonstrated in the December 1 climate action plan *Maine Won't Wait*, we will need, over time, to expand resources to support communities to plan for and reduce their risks from climate change impacts. Lack of capacity, expertise, and funding are consistently cited by municipalities as reasons why they are not able to address their climate risks. In addition, towns have uneven access to planning resources across the state to support other local planning issues, as evidenced in the attached chart which was part of the *Maine Won't Wait* report.

The plan recommends the state provide robust technical assistance and funding to communities by 2024 to support local and regional climate-resilience initiatives. This includes climate information, best practices, case studies, and funding resources to help towns understand climate risk, evaluate options, and prioritize actions; increased funds to incentivize regional resilience planning and cooperation and the inclusion of climate resilience in local and regional plans, regulations, and capital-investment plans; and encouragement and support for coordination among regional organizations, nonprofits, and the private-sector efforts, many of which are already providing important services and planning capacity for communities.

GOPIF is currently conducting a pilot project to work with 3 providers in communities across the state to do climate resilience planning and implementation. The purpose of the pilot project is to: 1) advance climate resilience planning and implementation in multiple towns that representing the diversity of Maine people and regions; 2) demonstrate replicable engagement models for assisting communities that integrate three key functions: regional technical assistance, encouraging best practices, and funding support; and 3) inform the future development of key climate-related focus areas for communities, community resilience goals, and support for community resilience in Maine. As part of the pilot we are working with other state programs who used to be in the former State Planning Office, including the municipal planning assistance program (DACF) as well as the coastal program (DMR).

We believe that this bill is a welcome opportunity to continue discussions about how the state could provide more robust municipal support to Maine communities in need. We believe the pilot project currently underway, to be completed by early 2021, will help provide further guidance to the state on how future support and resources may be best delivered.

The pandemic has significantly impacted the state budget, and in the current budget context, the Governor's office does not support reestablishing additional positions or the state planning office as a new organization at this time. Over the course of the coming year, further evaluation of the former state planning positions and programs – now distributed to other state agencies – and emerging needs should be considered. The sponsors' third goal, to provide "financial and technical assistance programs to help build sustainable communities" is worthy of ongoing consideration.

Thank you for your service and for the opportunity to testify today.

Hannah Pingree, Director

Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future

Maine Minor Civil Divisions

Resilience Planning Capacity

