

John Andrews
Maine Legislature

Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack and esteemed members of the State and Local Government Committee,

Thank you for having me. My name is John Andrews and I represent the 73rd District in western Maine. I am here today to present my bill LD 1220 “An Act to Require a Two-thirds Vote of the Legislature Every 2 Weeks To Maintain a State of Emergency Declared by the Governor.”

For over a year we have lived under an Emergency Declaration that no one could have predicted. If they had - they never would have allowed for the Chief Executive’s powers and decrees to go on in perpetuity. The last year has seen a devastating erosion of the separation of powers between the branches. Our system was never intended to function this way. It is an unsustainable pathway forward. We as legislators are the voice of our Districts and ultimately the voice of our people. The people of District 73 have had enough! We do not consent to the rule of an all powerful executive authority without any legislative oversight. We must reign in the Governor’s powers immediately and place stringent oversight of any state of emergency going forward for every future Governor of our state.

LD 1220 is the most rigorous of all the bills being heard today. Quite simply put it gives Governor Mills the absolute shortest leash possible, as she has proven that this is necessary. LD 1220 requires a 2/3 vote of the Legislature every two weeks to maintain an Emergency Declaration after the first 30 days.

One of the unique features of this bill is that it allows for members to be polled on maintaining a state of emergency if the Legislature is not in Session. This aspect of the bill is vital to maintain the separation of powers and the role of legislative oversight and approval even if the legislature is closed. Whether we are in the Chamber or not – the people still have a voice and they must be acknowledged and heard. Government may only exist with the consent of the governed. This much needed feature was lacking during the COVID-19 pandemic and this committee has an opportunity to fix that with LD 1220.

The ability to poll members from all over the state of Maine is something that is easily accomplished with 21st century technology. It is something that must be added to whatever type of sausage that this committee creates out of all the bills heard today. The voices of the people from all corners of this great state must be heard and acknowledged on such an important issue as maintaining a state of emergency so that this disenfranchising and business crushing situation never happens again.

I would please ask you to vote ‘Ought to Pass’ on LD 1220 to establish a 2/3 vote every two weeks after the first 30 days of a state of emergency and to add the ability of members to be polled on the matter if the Legislature is not in Session. Thank you all for your time and commitment to public service.

Respectfully,

John Andrews
State Representative
District 73