

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
2 STATE HOUSE STATION  
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002

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

My name is Laurel Libby, I reside in Auburn, and I represent House District 64, which consists of Minot and part of Auburn.

I say that I represent House District 64, and yet I cannot fully represent my district on the most critical issue we currently face. Since March 2020, the Chief Executive has been making all Covid-related decisions unilaterally, without legislative input. While I appreciate that the Chief Executive was duly elected by the Maine people, there are 186 other individuals who share this distinction. With respect, to continue on this path is to deny the citizens of Maine their full voice and their right to a representative government.

LD 1039, An Act To Safeguard the People's Voice in a State of Emergency, will ensure that in any future emergency we will rely on collaboration between the Legislative and Executive branches of government.

During the first several weeks of the Covid pandemic, there was value to a nimble response, and this bill balances that consideration well. We quickly, however, reached the point in the pandemic where the benefits of diverse input and a complex, multi-regional approach to the crisis far outweighed urgency of implementation, yet due to statutory limitations, the legislature has had no say regarding emergency matters. We remain at that point now, in crisis, rather than an emergency. Now, at a time when our

approach to the problem should be more akin to the use of a jeweler's hammer, the Chief Executive continues to wield a sledgehammer. The Chief Executive has not been with the people of Maine in over a year, but instead has been secluded and listening to other like-minded individuals, which has created a myopic response.

The 186 Representatives and Senators that make up the Maine Legislature are elected by the People, to be the voice of the People. Each region of Maine is unique, and those individuals duly elected to represent their district are best suited to ensure the voice of the People is heard. I have been hearing from my constituents on a wide range of pandemic-related issues for many months, long before I was even elected. But I know that the concerns that occupy the residents of my district are not necessarily the concerns of every district in our state.

We cannot afford an unvarnished "one size fits all" plan to address future pandemics or similar emergencies. To think that one viewpoint should determine how we respond to a crisis in both Presque Isle and Portland is the height of arrogance at worst and betrays a distinct lack of vision at best.

The precision and nuance afforded by all three branches of government fully functioning are the way forward in future times of emergency in a state as diverse as ours. In a true state of emergency, the Legislature may not be able to travel to Augusta, so other means of voting need to be established in law. This bill allows the Legislature, during a state of emergency, to vote on a proclamation or executive order made during that emergency remotely by electronic or other means. No matter what may be going on in our world, the voice of the People must not only be heard, but acted upon in good faith.