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**Testimony introducing**  
**LD 876, An Act To Promote Efficiency in County and Municipal Government**  
**Senator Cathy Breen**  
**April 7, 2021**

Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Cathy Breen. I represent Maine Senate District 25, which includes the communities of Chebeague Island, Cumberland, Falmouth, Gray, Long Island, Yarmouth, and about half of the City of Westbrook. I am here to introduce **LD 876, An Act To Promote Efficiency in County and Municipal Government**.

The idea for this bill was brought to me by town officials in Gray who have been struggling with how to adhere to the requirement that all public hearings be advertised in a printed newspaper seven days in advance. LD876 will simply allow municipalities to satisfy this requirement by advertising on their websites. Members of the public can then register to receive hearing notices via email.

The Town of Gray no longer has a local newspaper. The closest thing is *The Forecaster*, which only advertises once a week. In order to get the notice into the paper one week in advance of a hearing, the town needs to send it to the newspaper one week in advance of publication.

Due to this timeline, the town has a choice:

- It can submit its advertisement for a second public hearing before it holds the first, cutting down on the turnaround time. This carries the risk that if anything arises out of the first hearing that would change the second, the town has to scrap the second hearing and start the scheduling and advertising process over again.
- The other option is to wait until after the first hearing to schedule the second, adding two to three weeks to their work schedule.

In addition, the town must pay for these advertisements. Placing the hearing notice in *The Forecaster*, for instance, costs \$100. These costs add up over time – this is money that can be used for any number of other things, including services for town residents.

Gray advertises its public meetings on its website, on its social media platforms and in email newsletters. Since the onset of the pandemic, residents have been much less able to pick up the paper at the grocery store or post office, as they usually do. In spite of this, the town has seen an uptick in participation in public meetings now that folks can attend via the internet. This shows that most residents are engaged with the town's online presence and that newspaper advertisements are no longer worth the costs.

Removing the newspaper requirement will save towns time and money. Allowing municipalities to put hearing notices only on their websites lets them reach interested parties directly. It permits them more freedom in the scheduling process by not requiring them to worry about long turnaround times. And it will save the high costs of advertising in the newspaper.

There are folks in the queue who can describe this situation in better detail. I ask that you support LD876 and I am happy to answer any questions.