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Honorable members of the Committee on State and Local Government,
We need to mobilize to recover from disaster, not just the devastation of the pandemic but the devastation of our civic life that has been under assault for decades. The erosion of civic virtue and civility has accelerated along with the rise of the 24/7 infotainers posing as journalists and endlessly scrolling social media feeds spewing a relentless cacophony of dog whistle doublespeak designed to rally outrage and clicks to buy bunker supplies, but not to solve anything.

To heal and rebuild our communities we need actions and not just words. We need to get our hands dirty and give up partisan posturing, virtue signaling and ideological purity. We need community service not lip service. We need something like the Maine Service Fellows program.

The Maine Service Fellows program will help keep our young people in the state as they build deep community connections while tackling our most persistent challenges of workforce development, housing and keeping seniors in their homes, access to health services to improve recovery and substance use prevention.

I was an AmeriCorps VISTA for two years and can attest that a commitment to service changes lives. Not just the lives in the community you serve, but your own life. Along with Senator John McCain, "I believe the essence of patriotism is service to a cause greater than one's self-interests." I agree with General Stanley McChrystal that "serving together to solve public problems will build attachment to community and country, understanding among people who might otherwise be skeptical of one another and a new generation of leaders who can get things done."

I urge you to support LD 1010 and funding the Maine Service Fellows program, doing so will pay dividends beyond measure.