

# M.C.C.A.

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## LD 876, An Act To Promote Efficiency in County and Municipal Government

April 7, 2021

Chair Baldacci, Chair Matlack, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Stephen Gorden and in addition to serving as chair of the board of commissioners for Cumberland County, I am writing today in my role as board president of the Maine County Commissioners Association. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony to the Committee in support of LD 876.

**About MCCA.** Briefly, the Maine County Commissioners Association was established in 1890 to assist Maine's county government in providing vital services to Maine citizens in a responsive, efficient, and credible manner. The Association is based in Augusta and currently represents 15 of Maine's 16 counties and is governed by a board with representation from each participating county.

**Our position on LD 876.** We support this bill because it will save county taxpayers money without negatively affecting the public. More specifically, this bill would allow county and municipal government to satisfy the public notice requirements for public meetings and other events by posting the notice on the government entity's publicly accessible website. Among other things, this would modify Maine's Freedom of Access Act which requires that notice of public meetings be posted in a newspaper except in emergency circumstances.

This is an issue that has been raised frequently in recent years, but to date, the law has not been changed. The prior hesitancy about making this change relates primarily to concerns about whether digital notice on a website will be as widely available to Maine people as compared to newspapers. As we move into 2021, it is becoming increasingly clear that digital notice may have equal or wider exposure than newspaper notice. The pandemic has demonstrated that Maine people can function in a largely virtual environment, including the Maine Legislature and county government. At the same time, the reach of printed newspapers appears to be declining, which means that legal notices in newspapers may be reaching fewer people as time goes on.

Not only does digital notice appear to accomplish the necessary goal of notifying the public, but it is also the case that posting notices on government websites rather than through newspapers will save taxpayers money. Unlike newspapers, which charge money for a legal notice, there is no additional cost for a governmental body to post a meeting notice on their website.

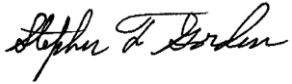
**Testimony of MCCA in support of LD 876**

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**Conclusion.** We hope this information is helpful to the Committee as it considers LD 876, and we hope the Committee will see fit to give this bill an “ought to pass” report.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen F. Gorden". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

Stephen Gorden  
President

cc: Commissioner Brian Hobart, Chair, MCCA Legislative Committee  
James I. Cohen, Verrill Dana, LLP, MCCA Legislative Counsel