



**Testimony by William Norbert
Governmental Affairs and Communications Manager**

Neither For Nor Against L.D. 875

***An Act to Protect Taxpayers in the Privatization of Services and to
Establish the State Procurement Review Committee***

April 30, 2021

Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government

Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government:

My name is Bill Norbert. I am the Governmental Affairs and Communications Manager at the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME). I live in Brunswick and am here to testify Neither for Nor Against L.D. 875, *An Act Regarding Remote Participation in Public Proceedings*.

FAME is a quasi-independent state agency that develops and administers programs related to the financing of both higher education and business in the state of Maine. We expand business and educational opportunities through our willingness to invest at greater risk based on public benefit. Our mission is to provide innovative financial solutions to help Maine citizens pursue business and educational opportunities.

We do not take a position on the bill's merits, but we do wish to respectfully request that you consider exempting FAME and the other quasi-independent state agencies from its application. We are a relatively small (53 employees) independent state agency that does good work with limited resources. Sometimes we must contract with outside, specialized entities to help meet our mission and to administer various legislatively-created programs. Examples include marketing firms and student loan servicers.

We are not state employees and do not think the bill's intention is to cover activities such as ours, but, rather, to ensure that work capable of being delivered by state employees at various state departments and agencies does not, without certain safeguards, processes, and review, get transferred to private firms without good reasons and thereby displace certain state employees. As a lean but busy agency, it is highly unlikely we would ever displace current employees by contracting some work out. It is also unlikely

we would ever reach the \$500,000 threshold required for review under the bill, but one can never predict the future.

In consultation with our fellow quasi-independent agency, MaineHousing, we have prepared an amendment for your consideration, which is attached to my testimony. There may be other approaches to satisfying our concern, but this wording we think is the cleanest and most straight-forward approach.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you have.