



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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RE: LD 1536

May 7, 2021

Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack and distinguished members of the Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Dick Bradstreet and I represent House District 80, which is comprised of Windsor, Somerville, the Unorganized Territory of Hibberts Gore, part of Augusta and my hometown of Vassalboro. I am here today to present to you LD 1536, *An Act Regarding Public Hearings on Citizen-initiated Municipal Referenda*.

I was initially prompted to sponsor this legislation when I heard that there had been ordinances passed in Portland regarding major issues around the local minimum wage. After the vote, I read in a couple of places that some people were claiming that there had been no public hearings before the vote and that they had not been able to present their points of view in an open public forum. I submitted the bill to beat the cloture deadline and then approached the Maine Municipal Association as suggested by the Revisors Office, because they believed there probably is already a law requiring such a public hearing. I obtained a copy of the law, saw that there is indeed a law requiring a public hearing on citizen-initiated referenda, and so was prepared to have the bill pulled. However, just before I did that, I talked to someone very familiar with what happened in Portland. He said that yes, they did conduct a public hearing but it was just essentially a "check the boxes" experience where the only things that were considered was whether or not everything was done in proper order to get the referenda questions on the ballot. There was evidently **no requirement that the actual subject matter had to be discussed in the public hearing**. Upon hearing this I decided to proceed with the bill. That is the reason the bill was originally a concept draft but now has some actual wording!

I believe it is good public policy and only common sense that a public hearing created in response to a citizen-initiated referendum at the municipal level must provide the opportunity for open discussion on the referendum issue prior to being voted on. This bill would add clarification to the issue, and I hope the committee will support it. Thank you.

Representative Dick Bradstreet
House District 80