

Testimony in Support of LD1522
An Act to Update and Eliminate References in Statute
To Aldermen, Selectmen and Oversees of the Poor

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of this legislation.

The undersigned elected municipal officials are submitting this testimony as individuals, not on behalf of our municipalities or our respective Select Boards.

We support the changes to state law set forth in LD 1522 to modernize the language in Maine state statutes to reflect the reality as it exists today.

Indeed, the reality throughout the country, and in the State of Maine, is that there are many elected female municipal officers. Knox County alone has more than two dozen elected female municipal officials, at least six of which have been chosen by their peers to lead their respective Select Boards as chairs and vice chairs.

The other reality is that many towns have already adopted ordinances or otherwise implemented the practice of using the "Select Board" reference instead of the statutory reference to "Selectmen" and "Overseers of the Poor." Maine state law should catch up to what many municipalities have already done.

Lastly, the reference to "Overseers of the Poor" should be eliminated. Research indicates that this reference can be traced back to the 17th century in New England. Today's Select Board members have many responsibilities including the overall fiscal responsibility of their towns which includes overseeing the town's fair and compassionate administration of general assistance funds for those in financial need in accordance with state statute. Other towns have implemented additional measures to provide financial assistance. While this responsibility of municipal officials is an important one, the practice will continue without the outdated title, which serves no substantive purpose.

We urge you to take this opportunity to modernize Maine state law to reflect the reality of today's world.

Debra J. Hall, Chair Rockport Select Board
Josh Gerritsen, Lincolnville Select Board
Sarah Ann Smith, Chair Hope Select Board
Alison McKellar, Vice Chair, Camden Select Board
Denise Munger, Vice Chair Rockport Select Board
Sarah Austin, Rockland City Council
Louise MacLellan-Ruf, Rockland City Council
Sandra E. Moore, Thomaston Select Board
Zel Bowman-Laberge, Thomaston Select Board
Diane Giese, Thomaston Select Board

