



Maine Municipal Association

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Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

In Support For

LD 422- *An Act to Eliminate the Requirement That Municipalities Provide Public Notice in Newspapers*

March 2, 2023

Sen. Nangle, Rep. Stover, and distinguished members of the State and Local Government Committee, my name is Rebecca Graham, and I am submitting testimony in support for LD 422, *An Act to Eliminate the Requirement That Municipalities Provide Public Notice in Newspapers*, on behalf of the Maine Municipal Association, which represents the interests of municipal government before the Legislature. The positions of the Association are established by our 70-member Legislative Policy Committee (LPC), who are elected by the councils and selectboards of municipalities in each of Maine's 35 Senate districts.

Municipalities have become a singular funding mechanism that supports the ever-shrinking newspaper industry at a time when local newspapers have all but vanished. This has the net effect of creating a monopoly for public notice publication in larger regional newspapers costing taxpayers significant amounts of money for the publication of a local notice in a distant regional paper their residents are unlikely to consult. Many of those larger regional papers have ceased to print paper editions on a daily basis and rarely cover town meeting matters unless it is controversial or close to paper headquarters.

The pandemic highlighted the ways in which our residents receive information best, and the use of Zoom-like platforms broadened public participation in local government. While many communities will feel strongly they reach most of their residents through the few remaining local newspapers, the option to find alternate ways to provide public notice would be welcomed in communities that lack those relevant local newspapers and must rely on major news outlets in cities far from their community centers.

Most town residents have become accustomed to going directly to the town website to find out when meetings, and special hearings will take place. Not all town websites are created equal. Officials feel that flexibility to provide notice on the town website and meet the obligation of notice requirement removes the growing costs for ineffective newspaper advertisement and frees that expenditure for a town to find effective direct ways to reach residents with no internet access such as direct mailing.