



Maine Municipal Association

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Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

Neither For Nor Against

LD 577 – An Act to Increase Availability of Election Information on Local Government Websites

March 2, 2023

Sen. Nangle, Rep. Stover, and members of the State and Local Government Committee, my name is Rebecca Lambert, and I am testifying today neither for nor against LD 577 on behalf of the Maine Municipal Association's (MMA) elected 70-member Legislative Policy Committee (LPC). For clarity, the LPC provides direction to the advocacy team at MMA and establishes the position on bills of municipal interest.

Any attempt to increase access to election information is encouraged and supported by local officials across Maine. LD 577, *An Act to Increase Availability of Election Information on Local Government Websites*, seeks to require the Secretary of State's (SOS) office to develop and maintain a web page within its publicly accessible website that contains general information on state and local elections. It further directs the SOS office to provide a link to a municipal or county's publicly available website and provide a template to said municipality or county, upon request, for a web page linked to the municipality.

While the intent seems simple enough, some of Maine's smaller communities do not have a web page or even a publicly available email address to use to conduct business or for public inquiries. Those communities lack the technical expertise or staff to keep a website updated with the information necessary to be useful. The LPC urges committee members to remove the language that requires the SOS to provide links to municipal or county websites or to provide a template for municipalities to design and maintain their own website.

The task to develop and implement the SOS web page with general state and local election information and link municipalities to that site, though well intended, would require additional staffing and, once established, would require periodic review and updating—a task that could quickly get overwhelming with nearly 500 municipalities across the state.

The LPC shares these concerns with the Maine Town & City Clerks Association and support their suggestion to consider an amendment that would shift the responsibility for the development and implementation of the web pages to the InforME staff, who are already trained and focused on the technology aspect the public webpages.

It is for these reasons that the MMA LPC is neither for nor against this bill. Thank you for your time and the consideration of our perspective on this issue.