

April 21st, 2023

Testimony in Support of LD 1297
“An Act to Notify School Boards and Select Boards That Lobbying
Associations Are Not Governmental Agencies”

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, and the distinguished members of the Committee on State and Local Government, my name is John Andrews and I represent House District 79 in western Maine. I am here to present my bill LD 1297, “An Act to Notify School Boards and Select Boards That Lobbying Associations Are Not Governmental Agencies.”

I remember when I was first elected to Select Board. I had a few good ideas that got me into the seat, but I didn’t know much of the players in the game on a state level. I was focused on local policies and local players. I had no idea who the Maine Municipal Association was and in fact I thought that they were an arm of government that we had to legally abide by. After a few months on the Board, I realized that they were a lobbying association for municipal matters.

I have heard similar stories from friends on School Boards who were deer in the headlights when they first started their terms. When they were engaged by Maine School Management Association, Maine Principals Association and others they all thought that these groups were from the government and had the authority of a government agency.

In reality, all of these groups are lobbying associations of one stripe or another. They take advantage of greenhorn board members by influencing them and their decision-making process. This bill would make them reveal who they are from day one to new and old board members across the state. It would go a long way to more accountable and transparent government.

Lobbyists need to register to perform their duties in the state capital with state legislators. It should be no different on the local level for local officials. LD 1297 would establish these guide rails where these lobbying associations and their agents would need to register with the secretary of the school board or the town clerk and divulge who they are and who they represent. Elected board members would be required to sign a form acknowledging that these non-governmental entities are not state or governmental agencies. They would acknowledge that they have been briefed that these entities are lobbying groups.

Local board members need to know the players on the state level as well as the local level. LD 1297 would make state level lobbyists and associations identify themselves from day one to our state’s local boards allowing for the operation of more transparent and accountable government on all levels.

Thank you for your time and commitment to public service.

Rep. John Andrews