

Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

In Opposition To

LD 247 - An Act Regarding Recommendations for Changing Place Names in the State

February 12, 2025

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury and members of the State and Local Government Committee, my name is Rebecca Lambert, and I am providing testimony in opposition to LD 247 on behalf of the Maine Municipal Association's (MMA) elected 70-member Legislative Policy Committee (LPC). For reference, the LPC guides MMA's advocacy efforts and establishes positions on bills of municipal interest.

Municipal officials strongly support the idea of changing place names that carry offensive or discriminatory connotations. These names often serve as painful reminders of our history of injustice and exclusion and updating them is a necessary step toward fostering an inclusive, respectful, and equitable society for all people.

That being said, local leaders question the need to create a dedicated commission to oversee the process of renaming these places. While municipal officials acknowledge the importance of addressing this issue systematically, they also believe a commission could create unnecessary hurdles and potentially slow the process of changing these offensive names.

Communities, local governments and relevant stakeholders are often in the best position to identify and act on offensive place names. Empowering these communities to make decisions without the need for an additional layer of oversight would allow for more efficient and tailored action. Furthermore, by keeping decision-making at the local level, we will ensure that the people most impacted—those who live in these communities—have a pivotal role in shaping the process.

Direct involvement fosters more meaningful dialogue and ensures that decisions are grounded in the values of its residents. For these reasons we believe a commission could delay progress, and in some cases prevent necessary changes from taking place quickly and urge the committee to reject this bill.

Thank you for your time and for considering the municipal perspective on this issue.