



Testimony in Support of LD 732:

“An Act to Prohibit Copyrights for Works of State Government”

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and the distinguished members of the Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Harris Van Pate, and I serve as policy analyst for Maine Policy Institute. Maine Policy is a free market think tank, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that advocates for individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of LD 732.

Enhancing Transparency and Public Access to Government Information

LD 732 promotes government transparency and public accountability by ensuring that works produced by the State of Maine remain freely available to all residents. Copyrighting government materials unnecessarily restricts access to public information that is funded by taxpayers. Mainers have a right to use, share, and build upon works created by their government, whether they be reports, research, legislative texts, maps, or other state-generated content.

Many federal government materials, including those from agencies such as the Library of Congress, NASA, and the Department of Justice, are explicitly not copyrighted so that they can be widely distributed and freely used. LD 732 ensures that Maine follows this same principle by making state-generated works public domain by default, thereby fostering greater civic engagement, accountability, and economic innovation.

Preventing Barriers to Innovation and Economic Growth

By eliminating copyright restrictions on state government materials, LD 732 removes barriers to innovation for businesses, journalists, educators, and researchers who rely on public records and data. Open access to government-generated materials can facilitate:

- **Business Development:** Entrepreneurs and businesses can freely use government-produced datasets, research, and reports to create new products, services, and applications.
- **Educational Benefits:** Teachers, students, and researchers can utilize government resources without legal or financial barriers, enhancing learning opportunities and academic research.



- **Media and Public Discourse:** Journalists and media organizations can report more accurately on government activities without worrying about copyright limitations on public documents.

Aligning with Best Practices and Ensuring Proper Use of Taxpayer Dollars

Publicly funded works should be publicly accessible. If taxpayers fund the creation of government materials, those materials should not be locked behind copyright protections that limit access or impose licensing fees. LD 732 ensures that Mainers get full value from their tax dollars by keeping government-created materials free for public use.

Reasonable Exceptions for Merchandise

LD 732 wisely preserves an exception for state agencies to copyright merchandise they sell, such as branded clothing or collectibles, which protects revenue-generating activities without restricting public access to essential government information.

Conclusion

LD 732 strengthens government transparency, public access, and economic opportunity by ensuring that state-created works belong to the people who funded them. This bill aligns with national best practices and reinforces Maine's commitment to open government and free enterprise.

For these reasons, we urge the committee to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 732. Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions from the committee.