



Maine County Commissioners Association

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April 28, 2025

Sen. Craig Hickman, Chair
Rep. Laura Supica, Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Veterans
and Legal Affairs
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: *LD 1814, An Act to Increase Transparency in State Government by Amending Laws Regarding Persons Attempting to Influence the Competitive Bidding Process and Lobbyist Reporting During Rule-making Processes*

Dear Members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee:

On behalf of the Maine County Commissioners Association, we appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony to the Committee in **opposition** to LD 1814. MCCA strongly opposes LD 1814 because it would treat county employees as lobbyists simply for engaging in their official duties before state agencies. This would in turn impose additional administrative burdens that could discourage experienced local officials from participating in important state agency processes.

About MCCA. Briefly, the Maine County Commissioners Association was established in 1890 to assist Maine's county government in providing vital services to Maine citizens in a responsive, efficient, and credible manner. The Association is based in Augusta, represents all 16 of Maine's counties, and is governed by a board with representation from each participating county.

What does LD 1814 do? LD 1814 would expand the definition of "lobbying" to include compensated individuals who communicate with state agencies regarding rulemaking and procurement processes. If those activities exceed eight hours in a calendar month, the individual would be required to register as a lobbyist and disclose their compensation. The bill applies to both private sector actors and public employees, such as county officials, who participate in these agency proceedings.

Discussion. MCCA opposes LD 1814 because it would unnecessarily and unfairly expand Maine's lobbying registration requirements to include compensated local government officials who engage in communications with state agencies regarding rulemakings and procurements as part of their public service duties.

Maine's county employees regularly interact with state agencies to represent the interests of the public in rulemaking processes and procurement discussions. These activities involve state agencies like the Maine Department of Corrections, which agency is responsible for establishing standards for county jail operations and finances. These activities also involve the Maine Department of Public Safety and the Maine State Police, which interacts regularly with county sheriffs with regard to law

enforcement throughout the state. Through DPS, there are numerous issues related to highway patrol, specialty services like the state crime lab or tactical teams, and training new officers through the Maine Criminal Justice Academy. These communications between county employees and state agencies that may relate to rulemakings or procurements are an essential and expected part of the job on behalf of the public. Yet, because county employees are compensated for their public service roles, their participation in these regular discussions with the state could well be considered “lobbying” under LD 1814.

Under LD 1814, these public servants would be required to register as lobbyists if they spent more than eight hours a month communicating with agencies about rulemakings or procurement matters. To know whether this eight hour threshold was met in a single month, county officials would need to track their hours meticulously, a further burden on their time.

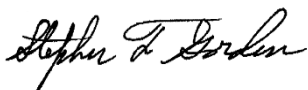
Not only would LD 1814 burden county officials, it would also discourage their participation in needed conversations and communications with state agencies. After all, if such communications are now considered reportable “lobbying” requiring the establishment of a detailed reporting system, some officials might prefer to avoid the communications altogether – which would be counter to the public interest, and run precisely counter to the transparency that this bill purports to seek.

Good governance relies on effective communications, and we believe our constituents want county officials to be in regular dialogue with state officials on issues related to how county government and county law enforcement activities are regulated and overseen. These communications are essential to ensuring a proper balance of cost and oversight, and they contribute to the public good. We further believe that county residents are not interested in burdening county employees with unnecessary recordkeeping duties and disclosures that detract county staff from undertaking important activities directly related to providing public service.

Finally, and importantly, this bill not only impacts county employees, but it also impacts counties who hire lawyers and other consultants to assist them in communicating with state agencies on issues that impact county operations. We view such engagement of lawyers and consultants as essential to protecting the rights of counties and their constituents, yet such engagements would also now be considered “lobbying” requiring time tracking, recording, and reporting – ultimately, at the expense of county government and local property taxpayers.

Conclusion. For these reasons, MCCA respectfully urges the Committee to vote **Ought Not to Pass** on LD 1814. Thank you, and please let us know if you have questions or need additional information.

Respectfully submitted,



Stephen Gorden
Co-Chair, Legislative Policy Committee, MCCA



Jean-Marie Caterina
Co-Chair, Legislative Policy Committee, MCCA

cc: Commissioner Andre Cushing, President, MCCA