



CITY OF BANGOR

Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

Testimony on LD 1814 – “An Act to Increase Transparency in State Government by Amending Laws Regarding Persons Attempting to Influence the Competitive Bidding Process and Lobbying Reporting During Rule-making Processes

April 30, 2025

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, I am Debbie Laurie, City Manager of the City of Bangor. On behalf of the Bangor City Council I am providing testimony on LD 1814 “An Act to Increase Transparency in State Government by Amending Laws Regarding Persons Attempting to Influence the Competitive Bidding Process and Lobbying Reporting During Rule-making Processes.”

The City Council is supportive of the effort to limit influence within the confines of the competitive bidding process. The foundation of a competitive bidding process is to ensure that all qualified parties have an equal opportunity to participate, free from external pressure or manipulation. When influence is introduced it creates an opportunity whether through favoritism, lobbying, or unethical dealings and can distort competition, leading to biased outcomes that do not necessarily serve the best interests of the public.

In reviewing the draft language of LD 1814, it appears that this bill would expand the definition of “lobbying” under Maine law to include communications and related activities associated with state agency rulemaking processes. Our management team, who are paid to fulfill not only their operational role, but to work collaboratively with various state agencies in carrying out their duties may now be required to register as lobbyists. We value our relationships with various state agencies and I believe having our “on the ground” perspective participating in the rule making process is valuable to the respective agency as well as our collective constituents.

While we whole-heartedly support the desire to limit undue influence of any sort, the bill as currently printed would appear to create a significant burden on engaging subject matter experts during the rule-making processes. Having to comply with the tracking and reporting requirements of being defined as a lobbyist during rule-making, may hinder access to critical data that may be necessary and helpful to an informed decision-making process. We would respectfully request the Committee consider how to balance the need for transparency, fairness, and equity with the value our municipal employees bring to the rule-making process.

Thank you for your consideration, and please do not hesitate to reach out with questions.

Debbie Laurie, City Manager, debbie.laurie@bangormaine.gov
Cara Pelletier, City Council Chair, cara.pelletier@bangormaine.gov