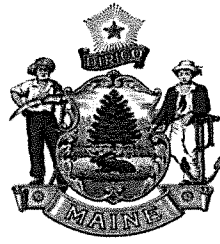


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STATE OF MAINE
ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE

RIGHT TO KNOW ADVISORY COMMITTEE

December 15, 2021

Kate Dufour
Neal Goldberg
State and Federal Relations Department
Maine Municipal Association

Re: Freedom of Access Act Requests Response Time

Dear Ms. Dufour and Mr. Goldberg:


During the first meeting of the Right to Know Advisory Committee, the Public Access Ombudsman asked the committee to consider how the fee waiver provision in the State's freedom of access law is applied and what impact that may have on accessibility of public records. The committee discussed the issue of fee waivers during the November 10th meeting.

During the meeting, discussion focused on the impact that recent changes to the freedom of access law increasing the amount of time without charge dedicated to searching for, retrieving and compiling the requested public record would have on fee waiver requests. Previous information provided to the Advisory Committee from surveys conducted by MMA in 2019 and 2020 indicated that the majority of FOAA requests could be completed within an hour. The Advisory Committee is interested in learning how many requests can now be completed without charge in the increased timeframe of two hours and if this change reduces the number of fee waiver requests and as a result the number of waiver denials.

As such, the Advisory Committee requests that the Maine Municipal Association survey municipalities to gather data beginning January 1, 2022 through September 30, 2022 related to the number of FOAA requests that can be searched for, retrieved and compiled within two hours. The Committee asks that you report back to the Committee regarding this matter by November 1, 2022.

We appreciate your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,


Representative Thom Harnett, Chair
Right to Know Advisory Committee