



LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

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Local Ambulances & State Licensing

The Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee debated the merits of multiple bills focused on the provision of emergency medical services (EMS) in a work session that ran late on Wednesday.

The first work session was held on LD 583, *An Act to Support Informed Community Self-determination in Emergency Medical Services Planning* sponsored by Sen. Curry (Waldo County). The bill permanently allocates \$200,000 from the General Fund budget for the costs of the independent facilitation of community led regionalization discussions for the provision of emergency medical services previously enacted in 2021 but not rolled out by Maine EMS (MEMS) until this year.

The benefits of the program are that the community is informed of what is available and possible in existing service reality with an eye toward understanding the balance between the desired level of service and the pressures placed on the property taxpayers to fund those services. Facilitated by a third-party EMS professional, the process guides community leaders to review and reflect on the provision of EMS services based on their own desired response, capacity, and local resources.

After hearing the need for an ongoing carve out of General Fund revenue, and a pause for partisan caucuses, a majority of the committee voted “ought to pass” on LD 583, along party lines.

Building on a similar approach, but without the benefit of community involvement, LD 176, *An Act to Establish a Regional Ambulance Service in Southern Penobscot County*, sponsored by Rep. Fredette (Newport) seeks to revisit the “If you build it, they will come” approach to regionalization. The bill establishes, in statute, a framework for towns to opt into a regional municipal ambulance cooperation in southern Penobscot County and creates and directs a governing board to determine the applicable employee salaries, per resident fees for ambulance operation, and priority of emergency response which receives little for insurance reimbursement. Unlike existing local agreements, the bill would force the authority to come back to the Legislature to amend their process. The proposed bill would require communities to pay to leave the program once they have joined and establish fees for non-residents and uncovered services. Not only would a town wishing to leave the ambulance service need to provide one year’s notice to the board and have a vote of the legislative body of the municipality in question, but it would also have to wait for the withdrawal to be approved by the board, which would include terms of compensation for the departure.

The sponsor claimed it was a challenge to get municipalities to meet and cooperate on the complex matters recently created by a Northern Light Healthcare decision to no longer respond to

emergency calls and instead pivot towards providing reimbursable transport services. Rep. Fredette believes the bill is necessary to give towns a ready baked option.

The director of MEMS told the committee he also liked the voluntary aspects of the bill, and both welcomed the sponsor’s suggested addition of a sunset clause provision, should area communities decide not to join the statutorily created body within two to three years. The framework could allow Northern Light to maintain

(continued on page 2)

GA-palooza

On Monday, April 7, members of the Health and Human Services Committee will convene at 10:00 a.m. in room 209 of the Cross Building to accept public testimony on no less than 10 bills seeking, in one way or another, to amend the General Assistance (GA) program.

A sampling of the initiatives in play includes increasing state reimbursement to municipalities, studying the feasibility of providing GA administrators with access to a statewide database, and amendments redefining who is eligible for assistance. The specific bills to be heard on Monday are listed in the Hearing Schedule published in this edition of the Legislative Bulletin and are described in the LD List posted on MMA’s website at <https://www.memun.org/Media-Publications/Legislative-Bulletin>.

Municipal officials who have thoughts, suggestions, and recommendations to share with the committee are urged to take part in the public hearing. Interested parties can participate in person, via Zoom, or can elect to submit written testimony, only. To submit written testimony or to register to participate via Zoom, please visit the Legislature’s testimony submission portal at <https://www.mainelegislature.org/testimony/>.

Since it is expected that there will be a large turnout for the hearing, participants will be allotted three minutes to address all ten bills. However, there are no limits placed on written testimony. Individuals electing to participate in-person should bring 20 copies of their testimony for distribution to the committee and staff.

Finally, public testimony will be accepted on a first-come basis, with participants being asked to sign up to testify when they arrive. The hearing will begin with presentations from the sponsors of the bills, followed by testimony from individuals in the room, and then those on Zoom.

If you have any questions about the hearing, please do not hesitate to contact Kate Dufour at kdufour@memun.org.

their services because the board would set the rate for services at the level necessary to cover the cost of operations. Rep. Perkins (Dover-Foxcroft) shared that as a former member of an ambulance board, the state had never provided any service efficiently and decisions made in the statehouse had made it harder to hire, license and sustain ambulance services.

Throughout the committee discussion it became evident that MEMS was not aware of regionalization efforts already in place in any detail throughout the state through the adoption of memorandums of understanding and interlocal agreements. Instead, they expressed that this statutory model would be the rallying cry for other municipalities to join. Rep. Hasenfus (Readfield), who chairs the committee, asked if LD 176 provided a better framework than the hodgepodge ways municipalities have approached the provision of emergency medical services, and in response MEMS suggested that the regionalization model envisioned in the bill would enable the department to collect the data necessary to determine the availability and quality of ambulance services statewide.

It is this observation that led association staff to wonder what role the state licensing authority plays, if they do not already know what services their licensees are providing under their current obligation to collect data from licensed providers.

The bill was ultimately tabled, as committee members had similar questions around how other existing statutory frameworks work, with Rep. Bunker (Farmington) suggested a model may already exist for fire districts, which does not include a regional carve out and might provide greater flexibility statewide. In response, Sen. Cyrway (Kennebec County) suggested using the fire district model may create a “Gangs of New

York” situation with everyone wanting their piece. Chief William Gillespie, president of the Maine Fire Chiefs’ Association, advised the committee that fire departments provide 65% of emergency medical services in the state, correcting the misconception. Ultimately, the committee asked for more information on fire districts and comparisons to other already constructed regional approaches for a future work session.

The final bill to have a work session, LD 245, *An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Blue-Ribbon Commission to Study Emergency Medical Services in the State*, sponsored by Sen. Talbot Ross (Cumberland County) was subsequently tabled, but worth diving into deeply.

During the bill’s public hearing held in February, the sponsor asked for an amendment to LD 245 to require all municipalities to adopt a plan for transporting ambulance services and report their plan publicly and to the state. Staff testified that while the association was neither for nor against the initiative, the introduction of new language requiring a municipality to adopt a transporting ambulance plan would constitute a mandate, particularly in the face of a lack of services in rural areas already.

Arguing that requiring a municipality to report should not be considered a mandate, the committee bantered around the lack of information regarding where transporting ambulance services or contracts exist in regions across the state. The irony here is that the state licenses transporting entities and their employees, who are already required to file reports with MEMS and there is nothing preventing the state from simply amending their reports to gather additional information. Municipal leaders fail to understand why town and city employees should be required to fill this role, in addition to paying for their

licensing obligations to the state.

The sponsor clarified that the intent was to require municipalities to adopt and post notice of a plan, but because the subsequent paragraph in the bill states that municipalities are not required to fund the plan, meaning the bill is not a mandate. The intent she explained, was to communicate the plan to the public, comparing it to law enforcement, which unlike EMS, has a state agency that provides the service.

Rep. Ardell (Monticello) advised that if someone wanted to know what EMS services were available, there is ample opportunity for them to ask, while Rep. Hasenfus pointed out it would be beneficial to know what every municipality had for services to help understand how best to deliver it statewide. Sen. Curry concurred, stating that he wanted the mandate to be the reporting and not the adoption of a plan.

Providing more information to the committee, MEMS advised that the new proposed commission under the bill would add an unnecessary level of bureaucracy that was already actively in play with the existing board. Sen. Curry observed that without legislators on the board there would continue to be a challenge to get funding through the politics of appropriation. Seeking a level of political success, he asked the MEMS director for feedback on the best path forward. Director O’Neal stated that missing from the current board or Regional Advisory Council was a representative of municipal and county government. Sen. Talbot Ross reminded the committee that because they had a commission, EMS received the first funding allocation from the state in history and this could not have happened without the dual bodies moving in different ways.

The discussion then turned to who owns “essentiality” and therefore the requirement to provide and fund emergency medical services, with many pointing to municipalities as the provider. However, it is rather clear that Maine’s constitution has already answered the question by providing that when the state establishes an essential service that must be delivered statewide, regardless of capacity, it owns a good chunk of that “essentiality.”

After a 30-minute caucus break, the committee returned and tabled the bill.

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

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HEARING SCHEDULE

For the week of April 7, 2025

Note: You should check your newspapers for Legal Notices as there may be changes in the hearing schedule. Weekly schedules for hearings and work sessions can be found on the Legislature's website at: <http://legislature.maine.gov/calendar/#Weekly/>.

MONDAY, APRIL 7

**Criminal Justice & Public Safety
Room 436, State House, 9:30 a.m.
Tel: 287-1122**

LD 421 *An Act to Eliminate Barriers to Reentry into the Community After Incarceration by Repealing Certain Driver's License Suspension Provisions*

LD 1005 *An Act to Allow Municipal Fire Departments with Trained Personnel to Conduct Sprinkler Plan Reviews*

LD 1135 *An Act to Permit the Use of Oral Fluid Testing in Determining the Intoxication of Drivers, Aircraft Operators and Hunters*

1:00 p.m.

LD 882 *An Act to Protect Communication with Providers of Critical Incident Stress Management Peer Support*

LD 1187 *An Act to Require Certain Mental Health Data to Be Included in Uniform Crime Reports*

LD 1215 *An Act Regarding Residency Restrictions for Sex Offenders*

LD 1295 *An Act to Waive Basic Law Enforcement Training Requirements for Full-time Law Enforcement Officers Who Have Successfully Completed Equivalent Courses in Other Jurisdictions*

**Environment & Natural Resources
Room 216, Cross Building, 10:00 a.m.
Tel: 287-4149**

LD 430 *An Act to Impose Moratoria on Hydropower Dam Removal and on Water Release from Nonhydropower Dams and to Make Other Changes to the Laws Regulating Such Dams*

LD 1210 *An Act to Regarding Renewable Electricity Generation by Hydropower Projects*

1:00 p.m.

LD 1158 *An Act to Expand Appliance Energy and Water Standards*

LD 1165 *An Act to Create a Fund for Safe Disposal of Hazardous Fluids from Salvage Yards*

**Health & Human Services
Room 209, Cross Building, 10:00 a.m.
Tel: 287-1317**

LD 453 *An Act to Require the State to Pay 90 Percent of All General Assistance Expenses of Municipalities and Indian Tribes*

LD 637 *Resolve, Directing the Department of Health and Human Services to Evaluate the Municipal General Assistance Program Database*

LD 657 *An Act to Modify the Law Governing Municipal General Assistance by Designating Broadband Internet Access Service and Wireless Access Point Technology as Basic Necessities*

LD 1017 *An Act to Include Food Provided or Served at Emergency Shelters in General Assistance Reimbursement*

LD 1029 *An Act to Ensure General Assistance for Housing Does Not Reduce Assistance for Other Basic Necessities and to Increase Presumptive Eligibility and State Reimbursement for General Assistance*

LD 1046 *An Act to Establish a 180-day State Residency Requirement for Receiving Municipal General Assistance*

LD 1066 *An Act Regarding Limits on Municipal General Assistance Programs*

LD 1081 *An Act to Support Access to General Assistance at Municipal General Assistance Offices and Designated Places*

LD 1178 *An Act to Expedite the Process Involving Municipalities That Illegally Move a Person to Avoid Responsibility for General Assistance Support*

LD 1274 *An Act to Cap State General Assistance Reimbursement to Municipalities*

Judiciary

**Room 438, State House, 10:00 a.m.
Tel: 287-1327**

LD 1347 *An Act to Increase the Cap on Liability for Governmental Entities Under the Maine Tort Claims Act*

LD 1348 *An Act to Increase the Limit on Damages Under the Maine Tort Claims Act for Negligence Involving School Field Trips*

LD 1351 *An Act to Require Antisemitism to Be Considered as Motivation When Determining a Violation of a Criminal or Civil Law*

1:00 p.m.

LD 1262 *An Act to Improve Government Transparency and Accountability by Establishing a Process to Allow a Person to Require the State to Enforce Certain Laws and Rules*

**Veterans & Legal Affairs
Room 437, State House, 10:00 a.m.
Tel: 287-1310**

LD 1289 *An Act to Amend the Election Recount Process*

TUESDAY, APRIL 8

**Health Coverage, Insurance & Financial Services
Room 220, Cross Building, 1:00 p.m.
Tel: 287-1314**

LD 910 *An Act to Collect Data to Better Understand the Consumer's Health Insurance Experience*

LD 955 *An Act to Ensure Human Oversight in Medical Insurance Payment Decisions*

LD 1301 *An Act to Prohibit the Use of Artificial Intelligence in the Denial of Health Insurance Claims*

LD 1310 *An Act to Amend the Laws Governing Insurance Coverage of Preventive and Primary Health Services*

**Housing & Economic Development
Room 206, Cross Building, 1:15 p.m.
Tel: 287-4880**

LD 1075 *An Act to Require Annual Reporting Regarding the Low-income Home Energy Assistance Program*

(continued on page 5)

State & Local Government Round Up

Bright and early on Monday morning the State and Local Government committee met for several public hearings with the first on the agenda being LD 1013, *An Act to Protect Taxpayers by Requiring Referenda on Significant Municipal Debt*, sponsored by Sen. Nangle (Cumberland County), which seeks to require a municipality to conduct a referendum when seeking to issue a bond for more than \$10 million. As noted by the bill sponsor, he presented the bill as a straightforward approach to ensure that residents had adequate input into proposed spending.

After delivering his testimony, Sen. Nangle was peppered with inquisitions regarding what the intentions of the bill were and if those intentions were geared towards smaller or larger communities. Questions also included whether the bill would be perceived as a mandate and if the bill should be amended to include quasi-municipal agencies and schools.

It was clear that committee members were hesitant to impose a requirement for a referendum based on a variety of reasons with no clear theme rising to the top. Discussion recognized that most individuals appreciate

engagement when the outcome could affect their bottom lines and livelihoods, yet likewise, municipalities appreciate their home rule authority to safeguard public resources in their communities. Quite a conundrum.

MMA's testimony pointed to home rule authority and the desire of municipal leaders to remain autonomous in their decision making. With no one else in the room to testify, a request was made for information on the processes municipalities use when issuing bonds, and for MMA to attend the work session on LD 1013 that has not yet been scheduled.

Next heard was LD 1090, *Resolve, to Form a Working Group to Address Vacancies in Municipal Government Management Positions*, sponsored by Rep. Rollins (Augusta) that aims to address the workforce shortages in municipal government by establishing a working group to study municipal management recruitment, retention, and staff development challenges.

Rep. Rollins shared that through his experience in municipal government he has seen a drastic decrease in the number of qualified applicants for municipal management positions.

His goal is to have a working group study the issue and come up with ideas for increasing interest in municipal government careers.

Candidly, Sen. Martin (Oxford County) acknowledged the good intentions of the bill but questioned whether this was the right approach, further observing that since the state is not able to fill its own positions, how will they accomplish it for municipalities. Committee members agreed they have also seen an increase in vacant municipal positions and encouraged the sponsor to work with MMA and the Department of Economic & Community Development (DECD) to come up with recommendations for the work session.

Again, MMA was the only entity present to testify. In its "neither for nor against" testimony the association pointed to the lack of dedicated municipal management post-secondary education programs as one of the factors contributing to vacancies at the local level. In addition, MMA pointed to decreasing civility as a factor fueling the lack of interest in public sector careers, at all levels of government.

(continued on page 6)

IN THE HOPPER

(The bill summaries are written by MMA staff and are not necessarily the bill's summary statement or an excerpt from that summary statement. During the course of the legislative session, many more bills of municipal interest will be printed than there is space in the Legislative Bulletin to describe. Our attempt is to provide a description of what would appear to be the bills of most significance to local government, but we would advise municipal officials to also review the comprehensive list of LDs of municipal interest that can be found on MMA's website, www.memun.org.)

Criminal Justice & Public Safety

LD 882 *An Act to Protect Communication with Providers of Critical Incident Stress Management Peer Support* (Sponsored by Rep. Salisbury of Westbrook)

This bill includes critical incident stress management peer support in existing laws governing the confidentiality of health care information, provides that peer support individuals are mandatory reporters of suspected child abuse, neglect or suspicious death, and designates peer support communications as privileged. As defined in current laws, critical incident stress management peer support includes services provided to public safety agency employees and corrections officers, which includes assisting an employer, member or officer to process trauma and stress and connect the person to appropriate resources.

LD 1005 *An Act to Allow Municipal Fire Departments with Trained Personnel to Conduct Sprinkler Plan Reviews* (Sponsored by Rep. Lookner of Portland)

This bill allows a municipal fire department to conduct a sprinkler plan review if the municipal employee conducting the review is certified as a plan reviewer by the National Fire Protection Association and the municipal fire department establishes a review process that includes a thorough evaluation of a plan to ensure compliance with all applicable codes and standards.

LD 1135 *An Act to Permit the Use of Oral Fluid Testing in Determining the Intoxication of Drivers, Aircraft Operators and Hunters* (Sponsored by Sen. Cyrway of Kennebec Cty.)

This bill permits the use of oral fluid testing in determining the intoxication of drivers, aircraft operators and hunters.

LD 1187 *An Act to Require Certain Mental Health Data to Be Included in Uniform Crime Reports* (Sponsored by Rep. Gramlich of Old Orchard Beach)

This bill adds the number of mental health referrals made pursuant to the extreme risk protection order statutes and the number of individuals who received services pursuant to those referrals to the uniform crime reports that all law enforcement agencies are required to submit to the Department of Public Safety.

LD 1215 *An Act Regarding Residency Restrictions for Sex Offenders* (Sponsored by Sen. Moore of Washington Cty.)

This bill amends the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Acts of 1999 and 2013 by requiring offenders to comply with municipal residency restriction ordinances adopted pursuant to state statute. The bill also directs the Sex Offender Management and Risk Assessment Advisory Commission to conduct a study and develop recommendations regarding a statewide residency restriction for sex offenders. By December 3, 2025, the commission is further directed to submit a report to the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, which is authorized to report out legislation in 2026.

(continued on page 6)

HEARING SCHEDULE (cont'd)

For the week of April 7, 2025

LD 1179 *An Act to Establish Minimum Safety Standards for the Construction and Use of Temporary Emergency Shelters*

LD 1184 *An Act to Require Municipal Reporting on Residential Building Permits, Dwelling Units Permitted and Demolished and Certificates of Occupancy Issued*

Labor

**Room 202, Cross Building, 1:00 p.m.
Tel: 287-1331**

LD 1407 *An Act to Direct the Board of Occupational Safety and Health to Develop Indoor Air Quality Standards for Buildings in the State in Which Public Sector Workers Work*

Transportation

**Room 126, State House, 1:00 p.m.
Tel: 287-4148**

LD 320 *An Act to Repeal Certain Motor Vehicle Inspection Requirements*

LD 547 *An Act to Modify Maine Motor Vehicle Inspection Standards to Permit Exterior, Nonstructural Corrosion That Does Not Directly Affect the Passenger Compartment*

LD 566 *An Act to Modernize the Motor Vehicle Inspection Program and Amend the Law Governing Inspection Fees*

LD 661 *An Act to Amend Motor Vehicle Inspection Requirements*

LD 667 *An Act to Modernize the State Motor Vehicle Inspection Program and the Law Governing Inspection Fees*

LD 1010 *An Act to Amend the State's Vehicle Inspection Law by Requiring Inspections Biennially*

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9

**Education & Cultural Affairs
Room 208, Cross Building, 1:00 p.m.
Tel: 287-3125**

LD 1404 *Resolve, to Create a Working Group on the Status of School Libraries and on Public Libraries in Maine*

12:00 p.m.

LD 242 *An Act to Extend the Maximum Time Period for Certain School Construction Bonds*

LD 1123 *An Act to Provide Funding for MaineCare-related Services for Public Schools*

**Energy, Utilities & Technology
Room 211, Cross Building, 10:00 a.m.
Tel: 287-4143**

LD 1212 *Resolve, to Study Opportunities for the Efficiency Maine Trust to Support the Promotion and Use of Modern Wood Heating*

1:00 p.m.

LD 1063 *An Act to Require Competitive Procurement of Electricity from Generators Fueled by Municipal Solid Waste in Conjunction with Recycling*

**Environment & Natural Resources
Room 216, Cross Building, 10:00 a.m.
Tel: 287-4149**

LD 1177 *Resolve, Establishing a 3-year Moratorium on the Installation or Reinstallation of Synthetic Turf and Requiring a Study of the Public Health and Environmental Risks of Synthetic Turf*

LD 1306 *An Act to Continue the Exemption for Polystyrene Foam Disposable Food Service Containers Prepackaged at Wholesale*

**Health & Human Services
Room 209, Cross Building, 10:00 a.m.
Tel: 287-1317**

LD 1261 *An Act to Support At-risk Families by Establishing the Community Navigator Pilot Program*

**State & Local Government
Room 214, Cross Building, 10:00 a.m.
Tel: 287-1330**

LD 1244 *An Act to Establish Requirements for Warming Shelters*

LD 1302 *An Act Regarding the Number of Voters of a Municipality Required to Petition for Consideration of Deorganization of That Municipality*

Taxation

**Room 127, State House, 2:00 p.m.
Tel: 287-1552**

LD 1278 *An Act to Change the Property Tax Appeal Process (Sponsored by Rep. Underwood of Presque Isle)*

LD 1325 *An Act to Create Clarity in the Laws Regarding Property Tax Abatement Appeals*

2:30 p.m.

LD 1355 *Resolve, to Require the Office of Tax Policy to Study Taxation of Renewable Energy Infrastructure*

LD 1368 *An Act to Provide a Property Tax Exemption for Allowing Shellfish Harvester Access to the Intertidal Zone*

THURSDAY, APRIL 10

**Education & Cultural Affairs
Room 208, Cross Building, 1:00 p.m.
Tel: 287-3125**

LD 1282 *An Act Regarding Eligibility for Historic Preservation Bond Proceeds*

FRIDAY, APRIL 11

**Transportation
Room 126, State House, 10:00 a.m.
Tel: 287-4148**

LD 850 *An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicle Laws*

LD 1194 *An Act to Phase Out Vehicle Excise Taxes and Implement a Fee for Infrastructure Funding Based on a Vehicle's Annual Mileage*

LD 1242 *An Act to Incentivize the Construction of Solar Carport Canopies and Solar Chargers at Highway Picnic Areas*

State & Local Government Round Up.....cont'd

It's expected that the bill sponsor will reach out to MMA and DECD to brainstorm some ideas for a path forward before the work session, which is not yet scheduled.

The last hearing for the morning was for LD 1091, *An Act to Reinforce Free Speech at Town Meetings by Allowing Persons a Minimum Amount of Time in Which to Speak*, sponsored by Rep. Hymes (Waldo). This bill seeks to allow residents a minimum of two minutes to speak at a town meeting and was brought forward on behalf of a constituent who has not been allowed to address the town meeting or board for a period of approximately four months.

Rep. Greenwood (Wales) questioned if the intent of the bill was to apply to only town

meetings or to all council and selectboard meetings as well. Rep. Hymes confirmed that the intent was to apply to all meetings, which would change the part of statute his bill was trying to amend.

The constituent at the heart of the bill proposal rose in support of the bill and shared his story with committee members who sympathized with the issue he was facing. Rep. Copeland (Saco) pointed out that for an elected official who is not behaving as residents would like, the remedy is at the ballot box. The constituent confirmed that the offending board member was eventually not reelected, but that it doesn't remedy that fact he was silenced for four months.

MMA acknowledged in their testimony

in opposition to LD 1091 that municipalities currently allow residents the opportunity to participate in floor debates relating to any warrant article at a town meeting. During this time, they can express their thoughts freely and are rarely limited in time when speaking.

Given the clarification that the bill intends to include all meetings, MMA further shared that council and selectboard meetings typically have a public comment period where residents can speak on any agenda item or, with approval of the chair, on any topic at all.

The fate of the two-minute rule is now in the hands of the committee, which will vote on the issue at a yet to be scheduled work session.

IN THE HOPPER (cont'd)

LD 1295 *An Act to Waive Basic Law Enforcement Training Requirements for Full-time Law Enforcement Officers Who Have Successfully Completed Equivalent Courses in Other Jurisdictions* (Sponsored by Sen. Moore of Washington Cty.)

This bill requires the Board of Trustees of the Maine Criminal Justice Academy to waive basic training requirements for newly employed law enforcement officers that have completed an equivalent basic law enforcement training course, which is currently a discretionary authority. The bill also directs the board to conduct a study and make suggestions for reducing unnecessary or burdensome requirements that prevent a law enforcement officer from qualifying for a basic training waiver.

Education & Cultural Affairs

LD 1282 *An Act Regarding Eligibility for Historic Preservation Bond Proceeds* (Sponsored by Sen. Hickman of Kennebec Cty.)

This bill amends the eligibility requirements for grants through the Maine Historic Preservation Commission for the preservation and restoration of historic properties to allow eligibility for properties designated as historic by municipal historic preservation ordinances.

Environment & Natural Resources

LD 430 *An Act to Impose Moratoria on Hydropower Dam Removal and on Water Release from Nonhydropower Dams and to Make Other Changes to the Laws Regulating Such Dams (Emergency)* (Sponsored by Rep. Campbell of Orrington)

This emergency bill amends the laws governing hydropower and non-hydropower dams by: (1) until January 1, 2027 prohibiting the Department of Environmental Protection from approving an application for a permit to remove a dam that is part of a hydropower project, as well as prohibiting the department from issuing an order to a dam owner to release water from the dam or, at the request of the dam owner, approving the removal of a non-hydropower dam; (2) amending the laws governing release from ownership and water level maintenance for non-hydropower dams to extend by 30 days certain deadlines relating to the required consultation process to determine whether a change in dam ownership is available and relating to the assessment

of certain public values associated with the dam by certain state agencies; and (3) directing the department to evaluate options for implementing processes, programs or initiatives to address negative outcomes that may be experienced by municipalities, businesses and property owners upon the removal of, or significant change in, water flows from a hydropower or non-hydropower dam, including, but not limited to, interruptions in or loss of water supply for adjacent municipalities and businesses and damage to or impairment of public and private property and infrastructure resulting from dam removal or change in water flows. On or before January 1, 2026, the bill also directs the department to submit to the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources a report outlining its evaluation and including its recommendations, along with draft legislation, as necessary.

Health & Human Services

LD 637 *Resolve, Directing the Department of Health and Human Services to Evaluate the Municipal General Assistance Program Database* (Sponsored by Rep. Henderson of Rumford)

This resolve directs the Department of Health and Human Services to evaluate the feasibility of upgrading the database to allow for the determination of whether a general assistance program applicant who is disqualified is seeking assistance in another municipality. By December 3, 2025, the department must issue a report on the evaluation, including a timeline for implementation of the upgrade or new database, to the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, which may advance legislation in 2026.

LD 657 *An Act to Modify the Law Governing Municipal General Assistance by Designating Broadband Internet Access Service and Wireless Access Point Technology as Basic Necessities* (Sponsored by Rep. Simmons of Waldoboro)

This bill modifies the provisions of law governing municipal general assistance to designate broadband internet access service and wireless access point technology as basic necessities.

LD 1029 *An Act to Ensure General Assistance for Housing Does Not Reduce Assistance for Other Basic Necessities and to Increase Presumptive Eligibility and State Reimbursement for General Assistance* (Sponsored by Sen. Talbot Ross of Cumberland Cty.)

This bill amends the laws guiding the administration of the General Assistance

(continued on page 7)

IN THE HOPPER (cont'd)

(GA) program by: (1) requiring the maximum level of assistance provided to be sufficient to provide for both housing and other basic necessities; (2) increasing the period of presumptive eligibility for a person who is in an emergency homeless shelter from 30 days to 180 days; (3) increasing state reimbursement under the GA program from 70% to 90%; and (4) directing the Department of Health and Human Services to reimburse municipalities and Indian tribes for 100% of direct costs for providing emergency shelter for the homeless.

LD 1046 *An Act to Establish a 180-day State Residency Requirement for Receiving Municipal General Assistance* (Sponsored by Rep. Quint of Hodgdon)

This bill establishes a 180-day state residency requirement for applicants for municipal general assistance.

LD 1066 *An Act Regarding Limits on Municipal General Assistance Programs* (Sponsored by Sen. Barnard of Aroostook Cty.)

This bill amends the General Assistance (GA) laws by: (1) limiting housing assistance to three months per 12-month period, except for temporary or emergency shelter housing; (2) prohibiting municipalities from exceeding maximum levels of assistance more than 30 days in a 12-month period; (3) extending from 120 to 180 days the period of ineligibility for applicants who quit or are discharged from work; and (4) requiring applicants who are capable of working to perform work for the municipality or a nonprofit organization as a condition of receiving assistance.

LD 1081 *An Act to Support Access to General Assistance at Municipal General Assistance Offices and Designated Places* (Sponsored by Rep. Sachs of Freeport)

This bill requires municipalities to designate the hours when GA applications can be obtained, and when those applications will be accepted and processed, which may not be less than 50% of the municipality's regular business hours. The bill also requires municipalities to post notice informing the public of the: (1) hours when applications can be obtained; (2) hours when applications will be processed; (3) name of the overseer who is available to take applications in an emergency and outside daily business hours; (4) requirement that the municipality issue a written decision within 24 hours of receiving an application; and (5) Department of Health and Human Services' toll-free number for reporting alleged violations of these requirements.

LD 1178 *An Act to Expedite the Process Involving Municipalities That Illegally Move a Person to Avoid Responsibility for General Assistance Support* (Sponsored by Rep. Salisbury of Westbrook)

This bill decreases from 30 to 15 working days the period for the Department of Health and Human Services to determine if a municipality has illegally moved an individual to avoid responsibility for general assistance support and also reduces the appeals period from 30 to 15 days after the determination is made. The bill provides for interest on unreimbursed amounts to be paid by the offending municipality, a penalty of up to \$10,000 for a repeat violation within a 12-month period, and creates the rebuttable presumption that if a municipality moves a person to another municipality, the municipality did so to avoid paying general assistance to that person.

LD 1274 *An Act to Cap State General Assistance Reimbursement to Municipalities* (Sponsored by Rep. Faulkingham of Winter Harbor)

This bill prohibits the Department of Health and Human Services from reimbursing a single municipality for general assistance in an amount greater than 50% of the total reimbursement to all municipalities in a fiscal year.

Housing & Economic Development

LD 1184 *An Act to Require Municipal Reporting on Residential Building Permits, Dwelling Units Permitted and Demolished and Certificates of Occupancy Issued* (Sponsored by Rep. Gere of Kennebunkport)

This bill directs municipalities to provide an annual report on certain housing data to the Department of Economic and Community Development for use in administering the Housing Opportunity Program, including data on residential building permits, dwelling units permitted and demolished and certificates of occupancy or other approvals of housing units issued and certain affordability data.

State & Local Government

LD 1244 *An Act to Establish Requirements for Warming Shelters* (Sponsored by Rep. Milliken of Blue Hill)

Whenever the temperature is expected to drop below 40 degrees Fahrenheit, this bill requires counties and municipalities to make warming shelters available at an accessible and appropriate public venue and open outside normal operating hours.

LD 1302 *An Act Regarding the Number of Voters of a Municipality Required to Petition for Consideration of Deorganization of That Municipality* (Sponsored by Sen. Baldacci of Penobscot Cty.)

Under existing law, a petition for consideration of a deorganization must be signed by a number of residents equal to at least 50% of the votes cast in the municipality during the last gubernatorial election, but in no case less than 10 residents. This bill repeals the "no less than 10" requirement.

Taxation

LD 1278 *An Act to Change the Property Tax Appeal Process* (Sponsored by Rep. Underwood of Presque Isle)

This bill prevents an applicant for a property tax abatement from applying to the county commissioners to appeal a decision of the assessors or the municipal officers with respect to nonresidential property having an equalized municipal valuation having an equalized municipal valuation of \$1 million or greater. Instead, an applicant must appeal the decision to the State Board of Property Tax Review.

LD 1325 *An Act to Create Clarity in the Laws Regarding Property Tax Abatement Appeals* (Sponsored by Rep. Daigle of Fort Kent)

This bill prevents an applicant for a property tax abatement from applying to the county commissioners to appeal a decision of the assessors or the municipal officers with respect to nonresidential property having an equalized municipal valuation of \$1 million or greater. Instead, an applicant must appeal the decision to the State Board of Property Tax Review.

LD 1355 *Resolve, to Require the Office of Tax Policy to Study Taxation of Renewable Energy Infrastructure* (Sponsored by Rep. Hasenfus of Readfield)

This resolve directs the Maine Revenue Services to examine and evaluate the current system of taxation of renewable energy infrastructure, including the history of municipal taxation in Maine and in other states, and possible adoption of a uniform capacity tax for renewable energy infrastructure. The office is required to consult with the Governor's Energy Office, representatives from the renewable energy industry, and municipal and county officials, and to solicit public comments on the study. By December 3, MRS is directed to submit a report to the Joint Standing Committee on Taxation, which is authorized to submit legislation in 2026.

(continued on page 8)



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IN THE HOPPER (cont'd)

LD 1368 *An Act to Provide a Property Tax Exemption for Allowing Shellfish Harvester Access to the Intertidal Zone* (Sponsored by Rep. Rielly of Westbrook)

This bill provides a \$500 reduction in property taxes to an owner of property adjacent to the intertidal zone who allows access for harvesting shellfish. To qualify, the owner must complete and file an application and proof of entitlement on or before April 1 with the municipal assessor who is further authorized to require the applicant to provide a copy of a plan describing the allowed spatial and temporal use of, including any limitations on, the access to the intertidal zone. The bill also provides that an application and proof of entitlement is confidential and not available for public inspection but must be provided to the State Tax Assessor upon request.

Transportation

LD 320 *An Act to Repeal Certain Motor Vehicle Inspection Requirements* (Sponsored by Rep. Fredericks of Sanford)

With the exception of the requirements placed on commercial motor vehicles, trailers, semitrailers, and fire trucks, this bill repeals the requirement that motor vehicles registered in Maine be inspected annually.

LD 661 *An Act to Amend Motor Vehicle Inspection Requirements* (Sponsored by Rep. Roeder of Bangor)

Unless damaged in a collision or natural disaster or if ownership changes, this bill provides that a new motor vehicle that a holder of a Class C license is authorized to operate is not required to have an inspection until three years from the last day of the month in which the vehicle was manufactured.

LD 1194 *An Act to Phase Out Vehicle Excise Taxes and Implement a Fee for Infrastructure Funding Based on a Vehicle's Annual Mileage* (Emergency) (Sponsored by Sen. Martin of Oxford Cty.)

This emergency bill phases out the collection of vehicle excise taxes and instead implements a fee based on annual mileage by: (1) beginning on July 1, 2025, reducing the excise tax by 20% for each fiscal year over five years; (2) beginning July 1, 2027, establishing a usage-based infrastructure fee imposed on a person who owns a motor vehicle for using public ways based on the type of motor vehicle and the annual mileage of the vehicle; (3) specifying that a person or a certified inspection mechanic during an annual motor vehicle inspection must report the annual mileage for the purposes of calculating the usage-based infrastructure fee; (4) establishing the Maine Transportation Fund within the department for the purposes of maintaining and repairing roads and bridges and funding infrastructure projects and transferring funds to the Highway Fund and municipalities according to the requirements in the revenue sharing program; (5) requiring the State Auditor to submit a biennial audit report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over transportation matters on the financial and operational impact of the usage-based infrastructure fee, including a comparison of municipal funding generated by the fees rather than excise taxes; and (6) requiring the department to submit an annual report on the findings and recommendations regarding the compliance of the usage-based infrastructure fee, the effectiveness and equity of the usage-based infrastructure fee and the costs associated with the transition to and the administration of the usage-based infrastructure fee.