

**2023-2024 MMA Legislative Platform**

LD ##, *An Act To Require That School Budget Referenda Be Held on the Same Day as Primary Elections.* **Sponsored by Rep. Amy Arta of New Gloucester.** This bill allows participating municipalities of a regional school unit, beginning January 1, 2024, to limit the time period in which a regional school unit budget meeting or referendum may be held to at least 45 days prior to the date of the statewide primary or referendum election in June or to the second Tuesday in June if a statewide primary or referendum election is not held in that year.

LD 88, *An Act To Provide Qualifying Municipalities a Percentage of Adult Use Cannabis Sales and Excise Tax Revenue.* **Sponsored by Rep. Sean Paulhus of Bath.** This bill allocates 12% of the gross sales and excise tax revenue generated by adult use cannabis establishments in Maine to the municipalities where the revenue was generated.

LD ##, *An Act To Create The Public Safety Health and Wellness Fund To Benefit Public Safety Workers and Volunteers.* **Sponsored by Rep. Lynn Copeland of Saco.** This bill establishes a statewide reimbursement fund to provide public safety employees, including volunteer first responders, with access to a public safety health and wellness program to mitigate both the physical and mental health effects of exposure to multiple traumatic events experienced by public safety professionals in the course of their duties and at all services levels. Exposure to consistently negative events is associated with elevated suicide risks, and early onset cardiac disease which often occurs earlier in life and outside the additional risk factors used to screen cardiac disease in the general population. The nature of public safety service exposes individuals to consistently undesirable events, elevating their risk for preventable mental health related issues and cardiac events. Many of these services are provided by volunteers on an as needed basis, providing fire and EMS services that would otherwise not be sustainable for communities. This bill allows public safety agencies to receive reimbursement for the costs of providing public safety specific mental health, wellness and specialized cardiac screening when such a program is provided as an additional benefit to the employee. This bill further directs such services be established and accessible by all agencies in the state including the use of telehealth provision where necessary, and with specific professional cultural standards established by public safety stakeholders and measures for outcomes. This bill further allocates 5% of the gross sales and excise tax revenue generated by adult use cannabis establishments in Maine to fund this program.

LD ##, *An Act To Reimburse Municipal Training Costs for Emergency Medical and Public Safety Dispatchers.* **Sponsored by Rep. Michel Lajoie of Lewiston.** This bill directs the Emergency Services Communications Bureau to create a reimbursement schedule for the cost of training emergency dispatch service employees when they are hired by another governmental entity as an emergency service or public safety dispatcher within five years of hire by an original unit of government who expended funds for the purposes of meeting training requirements required under 32 MRSA §85-A. The bill further directs a unit of government to provide reimbursement pursuant to the provisions of this bill.

LD ##, *An Act To Allow the Maine Criminal Justice Academy to Develop a Non-residential Basic Law Enforcement Training Program.* **Sponsored by Rep. Laurel Libby of Auburn.** This bill directs the Board of the Maine Criminal Justice Academy to review and develop an alternate non-residential program to increase recruitment of candidates from non-traditional sources that may see a residential program as a

barrier to serving as law enforcement officers. As amended, the bill adds a non-residential program to existing statute and provides additional staffing resources necessary to allow the board to evaluate and develop additional curriculum for the alternative model of delivery of basic law enforcement training that is not restricted to overnight residential.

LD ##, *An Act to Amend the Effective Date of the Housing Bill*. **Sponsored by Rep. Allison Hepler of Woolwich.** This bill amends the effective date of PL 2022, c. 672 (also known as Speaker Fecteau's housing bill) to July 1, 2025 to provide municipalities to comply with ordinance adoption provisions through their statutorily required public process, and with adequate information from the department charged with establishing statewide housing production goals that will inform ordinance creation.

LD ##, *An Act To Increase Available Workforce and Affordable Housing in Maine*. **Sponsored by Rep. Raegan LaRochelle of Augusta.** This bill authorized municipalities to use tax increment financing revenue in to purchase, rehabilitate, or establish affordable and workforce housing in any area municipality where housing is allowed. This bill also creates a Pine Tree Housing Zone program providing developers of affordable or workforce housing built within a tax increment financing district a sales tax exemption for purchasing goods and services associated with the project.

LD ##, *An Act to Facilitate the Deployment of Broadband*. **Sponsored by Sen. Nicole Grohoski of Hancock County.** This bill authorizes the Public Utilities Commission to adopt rules establishing a mechanism or process by which joint use rates are required to be reduced or capped and attachment timeframes are regulated by the commission to encourage municipal broadband projects. The bill also requires the Public Utilities Commission, in consultation with the Maine Connectivity Authority, to study the methods of promoting municipal broadband expansion, either through public networks or public-private partnerships, in Maine through a limited-period reduction in utility pole attachment rates for broadband providers that agree to deliver new-high-speed Internet service at affordable rates, and to study the average wait time for joint use pole owners to approve new attachments when the attaching entity is a municipality and ways in which to decrease or standardize wait times for attachments. The study will also assess the current status of preserved common space on utility poles and the effectiveness of enforcement mechanisms for utility pole removal or relocations. No later than January 1, 2024, the Public Utilities Commission shall submit a report to the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology describing the findings of the study under and any recommendations, including proposed legislation, resulting from that study. After reviewing the report, the joint standing committee may report out legislation relating to the report to the Second Regular Session of the 131st Legislature.

LD ##, *An Act To Increase Reimbursement Under the General Assistance Program*. **Sponsored by Sen. Marianne Moore of Washington County.** On and after July 1, 2023, this bill increases from 70% to 90% the amount of state reimbursement under the General Assistance program.

LD ##, *An Act To Amend the General Assistance Program Laws*. **Sponsored by Sen. Michele Meyer of Eliot.** This bill amends the General Assistance (GA) program statutes in the following ways: (1) requires GA administrators to complete a basic training course within 120 days of election or appointment; (2) requires municipalities to accept GA applications during regular

business hours; (3) amends the municipality of responsibility statutes to require the provision of assistance from 30 days to six months when a municipality assists an applicant in relocating to another community, and from six months to 12 months when an applicant is residing in a group home, shelter, rehabilitation center, nursing home, hospital or in a hotel, motel or other temporary housing; (4) on and after July 1, 2023, increases from 70% to 90% the amount of state reimbursement under the GA program; (5) provides state reimbursement for additional program costs; and (6) requires the Department of Health and Human Services to provide the services necessary to support municipalities.

*LD ##, An Act To Create an Enhanced Senior Resident Homestead Exemption. Sponsored by Rep. Maureen Terry of Gorham.* This bill replaces the Property Tax Stabilization for Senior Citizens Program enacted by the 130<sup>th</sup> Maine State Legislature with a tiered homestead exemption program for qualifying Maine seniors. As proposed, qualifying seniors: (1) earning less than 80% of the regional median family income are provided an additional \$25,000 homestead exemption; and (2) earning less than 100% of the regional median family income receive an additional \$15,000 exemption. The bill also requires the state to reimburse municipalities for 100% of the property tax loss under the senior resident homestead exemption.

*LD ##, An Act To Amend the Tree Growth Tax Law. Sponsored by Rep. Ann Matlack of St. George.* This bill amends the Tree Growth Tax law by: (1) increasing the acreage eligibility requirement from 10 to 25 acres of forested land; (2) authorizing municipal assessors and the State Tax Assessor to retain copies of required forest management plans; and (3) with assistance from the Director of the Bureau of Forestry within the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, enabling assessors to determine whether a submitted forest management plan meets the requirements of the law.