

LD 1818, *An Act To Facilitate Public Records Requests to State Agencies*

Testimony of Brenda Kielty, Public Access Ombudsman  
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary  
Thursday, March 20, 2014, 1:00 p.m.

Good afternoon, Senator Valentino, Representative Priest, members of the Judiciary Committee. I am Brenda Kielty, Public Access Ombudsman and I am before you today to provide testimony in support of LD 1818, *An Act To Facilitate Public Records Requests to State Agencies*.

Pursuant to Public Law 2013, chapter 229, An Act Regarding Coordinated Access to Public Records of State Agencies, the Office of the Attorney General gathered input from the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Office of Information Technology (OIT) and state agency public access officers for the purpose of reviewing the current systems in State agencies for receiving and responding to requests for public records as well as reviewing the feasibility of developing a centralized, government-wide Freedom of Access Act (FOAA) administration system. The findings and recommendations from that review were presented to this committee in January.

P.L. 2013, ch. 229 required that any proposed centralized FOAA system for State agencies include a single website address, a single e-mail address and a directory for the public to make requests for records. Information Resource of Maine (InforME) submitted two cost quotes for proposed solutions that could provide a centralized pathway for the public to make FOAA requests and a common administrative tracking system for State agencies. Other cost-neutral methods to advance the policy of "making it easy" to make a FOAA request were also considered.

LD 1818 includes three provisions that increase the visibility of executive branch State agency FOAA resources:

Section 1 requires that State agency websites have the contact information for the designated public access officer, or a link to that information, on the home page.

Section 2 requires a standardized link to a dedicated Freedom of Access Act page within the agency's website with instructions and information for requesters.

Section 3 requires that a keyword match for "FOAA" in the search feature of an agency website connect to agency resources for FOAA requesters.

Section 4 authorizes the development of a FOAA tracking and reporting system. I suggest striking "work with InforME" in line 17 as a minor amendment. Although InforME as a vendor has provided proposals, there should be no confusion that the State is responsible for procuring and implementing the system.

Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.