



MEREDA Advocacy Newsletter
3/28/2022

Welcome to the March 28 Edition of the MEREDA Advocacy Newsletter for 2022!

MEREDA Advocacy Updates

MEREDA has been ramping up our advocacy efforts in the last few weeks as our priority bills have moved through committee and will be debated on the floor soon. Among those bills is LD 2003, the bill to implement the recommendations of the housing commission. MEREDA recently sent out an advocacy alert on LD 2003, which includes an extensive summary, talking points, a mythbusters fact sheet, and information about how to contact your legislator. That information is available [here](#).

The MEREDA Local Issues Committee will also be looking at ways to build on the momentum started by LD 2003 to talk to communities about their development interests and concerns, and to try to stop the spread of growth caps like the one recently passed by ordinance in North Yarmouth. We think the heightened attention on the housing crisis makes this the best time to act to educate communities about what developers see as the biggest roadblocks to working with them. We look forward to developing a plan for this work in the coming weeks.

In addition, MEREDA will be making its last, big advocacy push for the passage of LD 201, the Maine Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit (MHRTC). The MHRTC is a critically important development tool that has been hailed by the legislature's own watchdog group as an effective, well-structured tool for economic development in Maine. LD 201 would extend the sunset date on this program to 2030. The bill has already received support from the legislature but is on the Special Appropriations Table pending a final decision on the costs of the program in the years for which we are extending it – namely, 2025-2030. We will be alerting members to reach out to their legislators in the next week to support this critical program, which remains MEREDA's top priority for the 130th Legislature.

General Legislative Updates:

The Legislature is proceeding on track to complete its work by April 20, or shortly thereafter. Committees are largely wrapping up their work, though many of the big ticket items still remain and will be worked on in the next couple of weeks. Legislators caught a break in terms of the committee schedule when a water pipe burst last week put the State House out of commission,



cancelling a scheduled session day on Thursday and allowing committees to continue to work. Some of the big issues that still remain are:

- **Supplemental budget, LD 1995**
 - o Governor Mills' revised spending proposal for the projected \$1.2 billion surplus includes, among other things:
 - Proposed relief payments to Mainers in the amount of \$850 for earners up to \$75k (or \$150k married jointly);
 - Two years of tuition-free community college for high school students impacted by COVID;
 - Modernizes and overhauls that Opportunity Maine Tax Credit to incentivize and offset student loan debt repayments;
 - \$20 million for the state's behavioral health system;
 - \$22 million to the Maine State Housing Authority to address homelessness;
 - \$60 million for testing, prevention, and mitigation of per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) testing, mitigation and assistance to impacted farmers; and
 - \$20 million for proposals on the Special Appropriations Table (which in total amount to roughly \$1 billion in requests)
- **PFAS (LD 1911, LD 2013)**
 - o Testing and prevention of PFAS contamination is a top priority for the 130th Legislature, and they are currently considering two bills that further address these so-called "forever chemicals."
 - PFAS in Soils (LD 1911). This bill seeks to ban the use of any sludge or sludge-derived compost on land in Maine. This has significant ramifications for towns' management of their biosolids (residual product from sewer and wastewater treatment), which would now need to be landfilled.
 - Impacted Farm Aid (LD 2013). This bill would provide income replacement, lifetime health monitoring, and potentially buyout programs for farms impacted by PFAS. The bill proposes to invest \$100 million in this new fund.
- **Tribal sovereignty and gaming rights (LD 585, others)**
 - o Legislative leadership, the Judiciary Committee, the tribes, and the Governor's office have been working to negotiate an agreement related to tribal sovereignty and the rights to operate gaming in Maine. LD 585 appears to be the primary vehicle for that work, and an amended version of the bill was recently passed by the Judiciary Committee

