

**Testimony of Patrick Woodcock
Joint Select Committee on Joint Rules
Legislative Hearing
July 18, 2024**

Chair Jackson, Chair Terry, and Members of the Joint Select Committee on Joint Rules. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on the legislative joint rules. My name is Patrick Woodcock and I am the President and CEO of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, which is Maine's largest community of businesses in the state and collectively represents over 5,000 Maine businesses in the state.

The Chamber appreciates the hearing today and welcomes a focus this year on improving the transparency and consistency of the legislative process across all Committees. I would start by highlighting that there are elements of the Maine Legislature that are uniquely positive. I have found the vast majority of legislators to be extremely accessible and I have been in committee hearings that can restore the faith in our democracy with a citizen bringing their own unique perspective to Legislature and being heard.

At the same time, the Chamber has increasingly been concerned about the efficiency of the Legislature, the volume of legislation and concept drafts, and the lack of transparency with specific legislative language. While many of these issues will require more substantive work of this Committee and the 132nd Legislature, we strongly support providing clear recommendations to the next Legislature from this Committee this year. Specifically, we do think it is imperative that legislative language be provided to the public at least 24 hours prior to a Committee hearing or work session. While this is a good practice with any subject, the issues that the Legislature has considered recently has become complex where specific language is essential to provide substantive comments to the Committee. A more transparent process will improve input from the public, ultimately avoid unintended consequences some the language, and enhance public confidence in this institution.

Maine should strive to be a beacon of the best practices of a legislative body in a representative democracy and the Maine Chamber of Commerce stands willing to partner with this Committee and all members in creating a consistent and transparent legislative process.