



SEN. CRAIG V. HICKMAN, SENATE CHAIR  
REP. ANNE-MARIE MASTRACCIO, HOUSE CHAIR

MEMBERS:

SEN. JILL C. DUSON  
SEN. BRADLEE T. FARRIN  
SEN. STACEY GUERIN  
SEN. JEFF TIMBERLAKE  
SEN. MIKE TIPPING  
REP. JOHN M. EDER  
REP. ADAM LEE  
REP. MICHAEL H. LEMELIN  
REP. CHAD PERKINS  
REP. HOLLY B. STOVER

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE  
GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

**MEETING SUMMARY**  
**December 17, 2025**

**Call to Order**

The Chair, Senator Hickman, called the Government Oversight Committee to order at approximately 9:35 a.m.

**ATTENDANCE**

Senators:	Senator Hickman, Senator Duson, Senator Farrin, Senator Guerin Attending via Zoom: Senator Timberlake, and Senator Tipping
Representatives:	Representative Mastraccio, Representative Lee, Representative Lemelin and Representative Perkins Absent: Representative Eder, Representative Stover
Legislative Staff:	Peter Schleck, Director, OPEGA Jennifer Henderson, OPEGA Senior Analyst Kari Hojara, OPEGA Senior Analyst Jennifer Greiner, OPEGA Administrative Secretary/GOC Clerk
Others:	Cathie Curtis, Deputy Secretary of State for the Bureau of Motor Vehicles Chris Ireland, Driver License Services Division Director

**Introduction of Committee Members**

The members of the Committee introduced themselves.

## **New Business**

To watch this meeting - the recorded Live Stream can be viewed here: [December 17, 2025, GOC Meeting](#)

## **Meeting Summary – November 19, 2025**

A copy of this Meeting Summary can be found here: [November 19, 2025, GOC Meeting Summary](#)

The Committee accepted and approved this meeting summary.

## **Further Consideration of Request for Review by Senator Bickford and Representative Arata of Possible Issuance of Maine Driver's Licenses to Unauthorized Non-Citizens**

Sen. Hickman moved to the next item on the agenda and welcomed two senior leaders in the office of the Secretary of State: Deputy Secretary of State for the Bureau of Motor Vehicles, Cathie Curtis, and Driver License Services Division Director, Chris Ireland. Sen. Hickman invited both to make any opening remarks they have for the Committee.

Deputy Secretary Curtis thanked the Committee for the invitation to come and speak today and to answer Committee Member questions. Deputy Secretary Curtis also introduced Director Ireland.

Deputy Secretary Curtis stated she began her career with the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) in 1978 and has been working with the BMV for the last 48 years, and Director Ireland joined BMV in 2021 after a 29-year career in the Air Force.

Deputy Secretary Curtis noted that the BMV is responsible for upholding Federal and State laws and rules as well as a commitment to roadway safety. Deputy Secretary Curtis stated the BMV issues driver and identity credentials as well as manages and maintains driver history records.

Deputy Secretary Curtis went over a letter to the Committee from Secretary of State Shenna Bellows, providing more detail regarding the BMV's processes and training as well as specifics the BMV is able to share publicly regarding the two cases identified by Sen. Bickford and Rep. Arata in their request to the Committee. That letter may be found here: [Letter from Secretary of State to GOC](#)

The request from Sen. Bickford and Rep. Arata may be found here: [Request Regarding Non-Citizen Drivers Licenses](#)

Director Ireland added his personal condolences to the family and friends of the victims of the two fatal crashes referenced in the review request from Sen. Bickford and Rep. Arata.

Sen. Hickman asked Committee members if they had any questions for the Office of Secretary of State.

Rep. Lemelin asked if the BMV uses work authorizations as proof of residency for those seeking driver's licenses.

Director Ireland stated the Title 29-A motor vehicle statutes require the BMV to verify legal presence in the U.S. before any State ID or driver's license is issued but does not elaborate on how that is done or what documents are used to determine someone's eligibility for a State ID or driver's license. Director Ireland stated the list of documents the BMV does accept for proof of legal presence in the U.S. is in Chapter 15 of the BMV Department Rules. Director Ireland stated an Employment Authorization Document (EAD), which is issued by the Federal Government, is a document that is allowed to be used by the BMV to issue a State ID or Driver's License.

Sen. Hickman asked Director Ireland when the Department Rules were last updated.

Director Ireland stated the Department Rules were last updated in 2022. Director Ireland added the Department Rules run through the formal State of Maine rulemaking process, are reviewed twice by the Attorney General's Office during that process, and there is a public hearing prior to the rules being updated.

Rep. Lemelin asked if a person who is an asylum seeker does not have the official form from the Federal Government that verifies that person is an approved asylum seeker, what is the BMV's process in this situation for an individual who seeks a Driver's License or State ID.

Director Ireland stated their process requires staff to physically and personally inspect all documents that someone would bring forward to claim legal presence. Director Ireland stated document numbers and document dates as well as expiration dates are entered into their system for every person they categorize as a Limited Term Credential Holder. Director Ireland stated in the case of a REAL ID, Federal Law requires all documents be scanned into the system.

Rep. Lemelin asked what the BMV does if an asylum seeker does not have the official form from the Federal Government.

Director Ireland stated that whether an individual is an asylum seeker or any other form of a non-U.S. Citizen, they are asked to come back with proper documentation.

Rep. Lemelin asked who provides interpreters for immigrants seeking a learner's permit, and whether individuals are allowed to pick their own interpreter.

Director Ireland stated the BMV has the ability to provide an interpreter if someone makes that request and also stated that individuals are allowed to bring an interpreter with them. Director Ireland added that if someone brings their own interpreter, that interpreter must complete a form declaring who they are.

Rep. Lemelin asked if Director Ireland or Deputy Secretary Curtis were aware that some examiners feel that interpreters who are brought by individuals to take an exam are cheating.

Director Ireland stated that in his four years at the BMV, there have been cases where concerns of cheating were brought forward, and also stated that he is aware of concerns of cheating brought forward before he was in his position. Director Ireland stated there is guidance in the handbook for examiners on how to handle concerns of cheating which includes reporting up the chain of supervision. Director Ireland stated that examiners also have the ability to stop a test while it is taking place if they believe they are witnessing

cheating. Director Ireland stated reports of cheating are looked into, and that BMV Detectives, who are sworn law enforcement officers, can conduct formal investigations. Director Ireland stated there were two cases this summer where some examiners expressed concern over an imposter taking a road test on behalf of someone else, and one of these cases has been referred for criminal prosecution to a District Attorney in southern Maine.

Rep. Lemelin asked what the normal pass rate is for people seeking a license or permit in Maine.

Director Ireland stated he does not have the data with him for the normal pass rate on the written exam for a permit of those who did not go through driver's education, however the normal pass rate on a first attempt of the road test is currently in the low to mid 70% across the State.

Rep. Lemelin stated he has been informed that the pass rate for immigrants who bring in interpreters is 100% and asked if Director Ireland was concerned by that information.

Director Ireland stated he is happy to go back and look into the data and provide that information to the Committee, adding he would be skeptical of a 100% pass rate.

Rep. Lemelin asked for that data to be provided, adding that has also been informed of interpreters providing test answers to test takers instead of only interpreting the question on the test. Rep. Lemelin also stated he has been informed that several examiners have brought this concern to Director Ireland's attention, and no action was taken on this information, and one examiner claims they were reprimanded for reporting this concern.

Deputy Secretary Curtis stated she was aware of complaints from examiners in the past that have been investigated and there was no substantial evidence found that cheating was taking place. Deputy Secretary Curtis also stated they do not reprimand people for bringing forward information.

Sen. Hickman asked what scenarios of "cheating" might happen in the context of test taking at the BMV.

Director Ireland stated cheating can take any form, including some high-tech options with today's phones with Bluetooth and Google glasses, noting the BMV has had reports of high-tech devices being used to cheat on tests in other states.

Sen. Hickman asked if the BMV had any significant statistical evidence of cheating of citizens verses non-citizens.

Director Ireland stated he does not have any data with him to answer Sen. Hickman's question, however he will look into this and see if that data is available.

Sen. Farrin asked if interpreters who are brought in by the individual are provided by a community service organization or are the applicants hiring an interpreter.

Director Ireland stated he is aware that some interpreters are offering their services for a fee, noting there is nothing in law or rules that prevents this.

Sen. Farrin asked that when interpreters for an applicant fill out the form required, is there any follow up, does the BMV know how many interpreters are used frequently, noting that an examiner is at a disadvantage in this situation as they do not know what the interpreter is saying to the applicant during the exam.

Director Ireland stated the forms the interpreters have to fill out (Interpreters Signature of Agreement) are kept by the BMV and can provide data about interpreters. Director Ireland also stated the Legislature has provided funding to have the Class C driver's license test printed into different languages which can reduce the use of interpreters. Director Ireland also noted the BMV has hired a couple of individuals who speak foreign languages who are able to help the BMV understand interactions taking place in exam rooms.

Director Ireland stated that as he understands, Maine statute in Title 29-A does not provide the BMV with authority to deal with cheating other than administrative penalties which would be stopping the test, and it can be rescheduled for a future date. Director Ireland stated the statute does provide authority to deal with fraud or misstatements, adding the BMV would welcome the input of the Transportation Committee on what could be done if cheating is detected.

Rep. Lemelin asked Director Ireland to explain the difference between fraud and cheating.

Director Ireland stated that as he is not a lawyer and that he would do some research on this question and get back to the Committee with an answer. Director Ireland did state, from the BMV's position, fraud involves misstatements and deliberate attempts to mislead.

Sen. Duson stated she is concerned the conversation is beginning to sound like a presumption of malfeasance if a person speaks another language. Sen. Duson asked if the BMV tracks pass rate data for other categories of applicants, and also asked if the pass rate for those who participate in a driver's education class is close to 100%.

Director Ireland stated the BMV does not breakdown pass rate statistics by any demographic categories, noting they do have that ability however they do not actively track this data. Director Ireland stated he would look for the pass rate of those who have taken driver's education class, also noting that if a student does not pass the exam the school can reissue the test and notify the BMV when the student has passed the exam. Director Ireland also noted the information received from driver education schools is in paper form so it could take some time to generate this information.

Sen. Duson asked for clarification on the ability of the BMV to pull demographic pass rate information as she understood Director Ireland had stated he could look into the pass rate for immigrants.

Director Ireland stated that in general most immigrants come to the BMV above the age of 18, and according to Maine law, they are not required to attend a driver's education course due to their age. Director Ireland stated the pass rate for those who did not attend driver's education could be available.

Deputy Secretary Curtis further clarified by stating that they would look to see if there is data available to determine the pass rate for people who use interpreters to take the exam, adding that she does not know if that data is available, but they will look to see if it is.

Sen. Duson stated that if the data for those who took the exam using an interpreter is available, she wonders under what circumstances the BMV is gathering data on this particular group of people, and no other category of people.

Director Ireland stated the BMV has data available that is gathered during the process of doing business, including the ability to tally up the number of people who pass or fail an exam. Director Ireland stated the BMV does not actively track data on any particular demographic, but they have the ability to look at the data and report on it.

Rep. Lemelin clarified that the statement he made about the pass rate of 100% of those using an interpreter was from a former examiner who worked for BMV for multiple years.

Sen. Hickman stated that his question--if the BMV had any significant statistical evidence of cheating between citizens and non-citizens--was for verification of the statement by the former BMV examiner noting that people can say anything. Sen. Hickman stated he would like to have the BMV, for a follow-up briefing, verify or refute any information regarding this former examiner's statements.

Deputy Secretary Curtis stated that under the prior Secretary of State there was a complaint regarding translators and cheating, which was investigated and the investigation revealed that there was no substantial evidence to prove those allegations.

Rep. Lee stated he believes this conversation has revealed a few policy concerns for the Transportation Committee, which he does not believe have anything to do with the immigration status of the individuals involved in the concern brought forth from Sen. Bickford and Rep. Arata, as in both accidents the drivers were legally present in the State and legally allowed to obtain the permit or license they had at the time of the accidents. Rep. Lee stated one issue is pedestrian safety, and another issue appears to be the inability of BMV, under statute, to deal with cheating which he believes the Transportation Committee should address. Rep. Lee also stated another issue involves the first case in the letter from the Secretary of State, which noted the driver in that accident, who had a permit, "lacked significant driving practice on Maine's roads". Rep. Lee asked what limitations exist for someone who has a permit rather than a driving license.

Director Ireland stated "lacked significant driving practice" refers to the number of days between when the driver received the permit and when the accident took place. Director Ireland stated that six months is generally the standard time it takes for someone to reach a minimum level of safety of driving, also noting for younger drivers there is a 70-hour-of-driving requirement with 10 of those hours occurring at night before obtaining a license.

Rep. Lee asked if there is some level of supervision required for someone who has a permit.

Director Ireland stated if someone has a permit, they are not allowed to operate a vehicle alone, they must have a person with an active driver's license and who has a minimum of two years' experience of driving, in the passenger seat beside them.

Rep. Lee asked if the person with the permit involved in the accident in the letter was under these supervision requirements.

Director Ireland stated the investigation into this accident is still ongoing, noting they have only received the initial report of a fatal crash through the law enforcement network, adding that initial report did state there was a licensed driver in the passenger seat of that crash, however they do not have any additional information at this time.

Rep. Perkins asked whether BMV can use a summons to a court date, even if the summons was for an immigration violation, as a valid documentation for legal presence in the State of Maine to issue a driving permit, adding that he understood this was true based on what he viewed on the Secretary of State's website.

Deputy Secretary Curtis stated that all such documentation currently required does have to be issued by the USCIS (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services), also noting they would have to look up the specific number of a form.

Rep. Perkins asked if this could be looked into and reported back to the Committee.

Sen. Guerin asked what would constitute "substantial evidence" in the investigation of cheating on exams.

Deputy Secretary Curtis stated she would need to speak with their investigators on what would be considered "substantial evidence" and will provide that information to the Committee.

Sen. Guerin asked what criteria for interpreters is required to interpret for an individual taking an exam, noting that if no one is observing the communication between the applicant and the individual who understands the language being spoken, it would be a situation where cheating could easily take place.

Director Ireland stated that all exams that are administered are overseen by an examiner who is a state employee, adding that he does agree that the examiner's ability to understand what is being said in a foreign language is limited. Director Ireland stated that the BMV has had recent internal conversations about ways to establish a more formal program for interpreters to go through. Director Ireland also stated that Maine does license language interpreters for other programs and that could be something the BMV investigates.

Sen. Guerin asked if there was any current vetting process for interpreters.

Director Ireland stated there is no current vetting process for interpreters at this time.

Rep. Mastraccio stated that department rules are easier to change than statutes, nothing that requiring interpreters to be credentialed in some way could easily be added to the rules and that the State issues licenses to protect the public. Rep. Mastraccio also observed that after a permit or license is issued, the only way to know if someone is driving without a valid license is when they are pulled over for some infraction or following an accident.

Deputy Secretary Curtis stated the Department has authority over the testing process, however once someone receives a license, the Department does not have any authority over how that individual operates a vehicle.

Rep. Mastraccio stated that if she wanted to drive in Europe, she would need to get an international driver's license. Rep. Mastraccio asked what is required for an individual that comes to the U.S for a visit to be able to drive here.

Deputy Secretary Curtis stated as long as a visitor from another country is not establishing residency, they can drive here with their license from their country with an international permit, which is an interpretation of their current license, for up to a year. Deputy Secretary Curtis stated that once an individual from another country establishes residency here, then they would be required to obtain a Maine license.

Sen. Timberlake asked whether during an exam for a permit or license, the individual is videotaped or recorded in any way. Sen. Timberlake also asked if the Department has considered giving examiners technology such as ear pods that, through a program or app, could translate what is being said during an exam during which interpreters are used.

Director Ireland stated that the BMV does not record, either by video or audio, an exam taking place, adding that they do record the results of the examination. Director Ireland stated there is one exception currently, the digital testing system does have a camera that takes occasional snapshots of the individual which allows the department to determine who exactly took the test in case of a suspicion of fraud involving that individual.

Director Ireland also stated the staff is trained to use Google Translate on their State-issued work phone which can facilitate interactions between an examiner and someone who speaks another language as well as facilitates a check-in process for an individual. Director Ireland noted that this technology is not used during road tests.

Sen. Timberlake stated he believes that Google Translate could be used effectively by examiners to understand what is being discussed during an exam.

Sen. Timberlake asked if any individual has been issued a REAL ID without providing a valid, non-immigration Visa or other USCIS document that shows they are here legally and not pending an immigration trial.

Director Ireland stated REAL IDs have been issued based on a work authorization document, because that is on the list of acceptable documents from TSA (Transportation Security Administration). Director Ireland also stated the federal regulations on REAL ID required the Department to look in the federal immigration database, using a system called SAVE (Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements). Director Ireland stated the staff takes the document provided by the applicant, logs onto SAVE, enters the information on the provided document and then SAVE provides a reply that informs whether the document is valid and if the person who provided the document is legally present in the country from the perspective of the federal government. Director Ireland added that REAL ID is a federally regulated program, and the Department relies on federal regulations.

Sen. Timberlake asked if the Department was using all the standards that the federal government requires.

Director Ireland stated the Department was inspected by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Transportation Security Administration this past Fall from which the Department received extremely



high grades. Director Ireland stated he would never say 100% something does or does not happen, however, he is confident the Bureau is doing the right thing on a recurring basis.

Sen. Tipping noted the initial concern brought before the Committee was that people who were in the State illegally were obtaining licenses and permits, adding that this has been very well addressed by the Department in the letter and today's conversation. Sen. Tipping asked if the Department was aware of any evidence of differences in accident rates based on immigration status.

Deputy Secretary Curtis stated she does not have data on accident rates based on immigration status.

Sen. Tipping asked if Deputy Secretary Curtis was aware of any systemic cheating by any groups of people, whether by those who speak English as a second language or even people from another state.

Deputy Secretary Curtis stated that they did find an imposter who was taking a road test for other individuals, noting that as soon as this was discovered it was reported to the authorities, adding they would take action whenever fraud was identified.

Sen. Tipping stated that today's conversation is taking place during a time in the country of anti-immigrant sentiments being expressed and wanted to note that we are a nation and state of immigrants and commended the Department on its professionalism.

Rep. Lee stated he was looking at statute in Title 29-A and asked if it was correct that someone who is hearing impaired is entitled to an ASL (American Sign Language) interpreter for driving tests.

Director Ireland stated that was correct and is part of the Federal Americans with Disabilities Act compliance requirements.

Rep. Lee asked if there were any concerns with those using an ASL interpreter may be cheating.

Director Ireland stated he has not been informed of any cheating concerns of those using an ASL interpreter.

Rep. Lee suggested for the Department take a look at the Judicial Branch, which has a roster of licensed interpreters, and how it has parameters around who can be an interpreter.

Rep. Lemelin stated, for the record, that his questions today have nothing to do with anti-immigration, noting his wife is an immigrant, nor is he intending to attack the Department. Rep. Lemelin stated that there is a whistleblower who has come forward who brought attention to some concerns, as well as five other people who work at the Department who are willing to testify under oath that there are some problems with cheating on exams through interpreters. Rep. Lemelin stated he wanted to get to the facts to see if there is a problem that the leadership may not even be aware of.

Rep. Lemelin stated he did ask an examiner about Google Translate, and that the examiner was told it could be used for road tests but not for the written tests. Rep. Lemelin stated a recommendation might be to suggest to the examiners to use Google Translate during the written tests. Rep. Lemelin stated he also asked an examiner about the earbuds, and the examiner indicated that may not work in an exam room as there can be multiple exams going on at the same time.

Rep. Lemelin asked, if an interpreter is signing the form, MV81, stating that they are an interpreter and will abide by the Code of Ethics, and they were cheating, if that would be considered a form of fraud. Rep. Lemelin also asked if every non-citizen has to provide a photo ID to prove it is them at the time they apply, or do they only have to provide documentation.

Director Ireland stated, regarding Google Translate, that it has been made clear to examiners that it is not to be used during a road test due to safety concerns. Director Ireland stated that Google Translate is at minimum a transcription tool which can be reviewed. Director Ireland stated he would get back to the Committee on the issue of fraud vs. cheating.

Director Ireland stated that a photo ID is not required as part of the immigration documents of non-citizens, adding they also do not require a photo ID the first time a U.S. Citizen applies for a State ID or a license, stating that a birth certificate can be provided.

Rep. Lemelin asked Director Ireland whether he found not requiring a photo ID of non-citizens problematic.

Director Ireland stated the way that our nation establishes identity is on that first source document which is often not accompanied by a photo. Director Ireland stated that the Department does do some verification of identity, for example, a social security number can be verified with the Social Security Administration, as well as a number of other verifications to try to substantiate and establish the identity. Director Ireland stated that BMV is the default identity agency in Maine, and this is taken very seriously and there are steps that staff must go through before an individual is issued an ID. Director Ireland also stated staff must take nationally-vetted annual fraud detection training.

Rep. Lemelin asked if every complaint is fully investigated.

Deputy Secretary Curtis stated there are different levels of investigation of complaints, as well as a law enforcement team that performs criminal investigations. Deputy Secretary Curtis stated that concerns voiced by staff are taken into consideration but also stated that when people make very broad statements, for example stating all immigrants are cheating, that probably would not be investigated.

Director Ireland stated that he does become aware of the vast majority of concerns raised by examiners, and the chain of supervision including the chief examiner and examiner supervisors do look into every complaint that is raised though not all complaints make it to the level of a law enforcement investigation.

Rep. Lemelin asked if every complaint made is documented, and those who looked into the complaint is documented.

Deputy Secretary Curtis stated often notes are taken during conversations with employees, although these notes are not kept for a long period of time.

Director Ireland stated that typically examiners are asked to write up their concern in an email, noting that an email by a state employee is a record.

Rep. Lemelin asked, regarding a previous complaint that an examiner made stating he believes a specific interpreter facilitated cheating on an exam, is it possible to learn who investigated the complaint and learn if the individual who was taking the exam brought their own interpreter with them to the exam.

Sen. Hickman also added to Rep. Lemelin's question, asking that if an examiner does not understand the language being used, how can the examiner assert that someone is cheating.

Deputy Secretary Curtis stated it is a challenge for examiners, noting they have had some examiners say that the sentence should have taken a more words to interpret into another language than were spoken. Deputy Secretary Curtis stated that some languages use fewer words to interpret the same meaning in the English language, therefore the number of words used to interpret an English sentence does not, in her mind, constitute cheating.

Sen. Hickman stated he has been told that there is a difference between translation and interpretation, so that an interpreter may not translate the sentence word for word but will interpreter what the sentence means. Sen. Hickman asked if the examiners are trained on the difference.

Deputy Secretary Curtis stated training does include instructing that translation is a written document and interpreting is verbal. Deputy Secretary Curtis stated that interpretation can involve fewer words than a translation, and that the use of fewer verbal words cannot be the basis of an allegation of cheating.

Sen. Hickman asked what the response is to an examiner who states he believes cheating is occurring because of fewer words being spoken than the examiner believes should be, and how often this happens.

Deputy Secretary Curtis stated that there would be a conversation with that examiner about the difference between translation and interpreting, noting that there have been two or three instances during the past four years where an examiner has raised concerns about individuals who use interpreters and whether they are cheating.

Sen. Hickman asked if there was a record of the investigation of cheating which happened under the prior Secretary of State and could that be shared with the Committee.

Deputy Secretary Curtis stated that there is a record of that investigation.

Sen. Hickman stated that the Committee would like to see the investigation and its results so the Committee can determine if the investigation was thorough enough for the purpose of today's conversation.

Sen. Duson thanked Deputy Secretary Curtis and Director Ireland for their thorough response provided in the letter to the Committee regarding the two accidents. Sen. Duson noted that the letter makes it clear that while the accidents were horrible, they are not necessarily related to the immigration status of the drivers. Sen. Duson stated that today's conversation is far beyond the matter presented to the office of the Secretary of State. Sen. Duson stated in order to have this Committee examine these other matters that were not in the request letter received by this Committee, there should be a letter of allegations, concerns or suspicions from a member of the Committee. Sen. Duson stated she objects to the broad scope of the conversation. Sen. Duson asked if the Department collects data on the number of permitted drivers who have an accident.

Director Ireland stated the Department does have data on the number of permitted drivers who have an accident, noting their system receives crash reports from the Maine crash reporting systems and assigns them to a driver's record. Director Ireland stated he would get this information for the Committee.

Sen. Duson asked if either of the drivers involved in the accidents had an interpreter present during their request for a driver's license, adding she did not see this information on the review request letter.

Director Ireland stated both of the drivers involved in the accidents had an interpreter with them at the time they took the written exam.

Sen. Duson asked, regarding the second driver in the letter, who had a license for some time, if the renewal process is proforma during which there was no interpreter needed or required.

Director Ireland stated that there is always the opportunity for an individual to request an interpreter, whether on the phone or in person at no cost to the individual.

Sen. Duson noted that is consistent with the availability of interpreter services across the state agencies, that the agency, upon request from an individual, would have to provide an interpreter, adding that those interpreters are fully vetted.

Sen. Duson asked, regarding the second driver who, after several renewals sought a REAL ID, if it was understood correctly that when obtaining a REAL ID there is a requirement that you submit the individual's name and credentials through the SAVE system, and whether that happened for this driver.

Director Ireland answered in the affirmative.

Sen. Duson asked if the Department has the ability to look into specific allegations from a whistleblower presented to this Committee, or if this would be outside of what the system can do.

Deputy Secretary Curtis stated they want to be transparent and welcome any investigation this Committee does and would do everything to fully comply with requests and provide whatever data they have. Deputy Secretary Curtis added that the Department has a very old computer system they are working on modernizing, noting that system does not capture everything.

Sen. Duson stated, from her perception, this broad conversation adds to the current atmosphere of suspicion of an individual because they are brown, or dress a certain way, or speak another language. Sen. Duson stated while she wants the Committee to follow the steps looking into factual allegations, she has a problem sitting through this conversation without giving the Department time to dig through records or let the Committee know if this is something the Committee should be alarmed about.

Rep. Perkins asked if he was an undocumented immigrant and wanted a REAL ID, would he be able to get a REAL ID even if he had a work authorization.

Deputy Secretary Curtis stated an individual must be legally present in the country to be able to obtain a REAL ID.

Director Ireland stated the term “undocumented” is an interesting term, adding that identification credentials are not given to anyone who is not documented with something.

Rep. Perkins asked he was an asylum seeker and only had a petition for asylum and a work permit, would he be able to obtain a REAL ID.

Director Ireland stated he would like to go back and look into Rep. Perkin’s questions, adding that it is an interesting combination, and he did not want to provide the incorrect answer.

Deputy Secretary Curtis stated she believes the answer is the Department complies with the REAL ID requirements. Deputy Secretary Curtis also stated the list of documents accepted to obtain a REAL ID is lengthy and every other state is complying with that list, adding she is not aware of any state that would reject a requirement that is on the list.

Sen. Hickman stated that if the Department finds the answer to Rep. Perkins question, it would be compliant with federal law. Sen. Hickman noted that if REAL IDs have been issued to asylum seekers with work permits, it is because federal law allows for it and if that is something we believe is wrong, we would have to reach out to our congressional delegation to have them seek to change federal law.

Rep. Perkins stated that he does not believe the example he presented would be compliant with federal law. Rep. Perkins asked, if he has an H-1B visa and applied for a REAL ID, would he be authorized to get one under the current processes.

Director Ireland stated he did not have that specific answer at this time but will get an answer for the Committee.

Rep. Perkins also asked for data on any REAL IDs that may have been issued to an individual who is an asylum seeker with a work permit.

Sen. Guerin asked who makes the decision on whether a cheating allegation is investigated.

Deputy Secretary Curtis stated she would be the one to make the decision on if a cheating allegation is investigated.

Sen. Guerin asked, in the case of using unvetted interpreters, what would Deputy Secretary Curtis use as an example of acceptable evidence of cheating that should be investigated.

Deputy Secretary Curtis stated she would want to be able to have the evidence be documented proof that an answer was provided to an individual taking an exam.

Sen. Guerin asked what documented proof of an answer provided to an individual would be.

Deputy Secretary Curtis stated it is hard to say what that proof would be without knowing the circumstances, adding that in general she would want to make sure that the allegation was specific, or be able to look back at what the documentation shows, or to look back at patterns. Deputy Secretary Curtis also

stated that any investigation needs to be specific, and it needs to be able to be proved, noting that she could not list all the ways cheating could be proved as people are using unique ways.

Sen. Guerin asked if allegations are submitted by an established procedure, such as an on-line form.

Deputy Secretary Curtis stated employees are asked to put allegations in writing and submit them through email.

Sen. Guerin asked if there was an allegation of cheating, would the exam be flagged or noted so that someone could go back and see that in the individual's record.

Deputy Secretary Curtis stated she believes that to flag an individual's record based on an allegation would be a dangerous road to go down.

Rep. Lee stated he has been looking at 6 CFR § 37.1, and it states when an applicant presents one of the identity documents listed, the issuing state's verification of identity documents does not provide satisfactory evidence of lawful status, and the applicant must also present a second document from that list of documents or documentation issued by DHHS or other federal agencies demonstrating lawful status as determined by USICS. Rep. Lee stated it is clear that an individual presenting with only an EAD would not be able to get a REAL ID.

Sen. Farrin stated he understands Sen. Duson's earlier comments, adding that he had some of the same concerns, adding what caught his attention was the situation with the permitted driver, and how soon the accident occurred after the permit was issued and if there is some kind of systemic problem. Sen. Farrin stated that he is here to try to solve problems involving the death of two Mainers who died in terrible accidents and figure out if there was a cause. Sen. Farrin also stated that in looking further into this situation it may be revealed that the immigrant community does not have the resources, and the pool of interpreters is very small.

Deputy Secretary Curtis stated that one piece of the conversation missing today is that these two very unfortunate crashes could have been caused by something completely different, adding they could have been caused by a pedestrian not wearing reflective clothing, or something happening inside the vehicle, adding both accidents are still under investigation. Deputy Secretary Curtis stated that she reviews the police report for every motor vehicle fatality that happens in Maine, adding that there are numerous circumstances that can contribute to accidents.

Sen. Hickman stated that distracted driving is a real problem, but distracted walking is also a real problem, noting he is not blaming pedestrians in the two accidents discussed today, however he sees people walking while on phones and not paying attention to their surroundings.

Sen. Hickman stated he appreciates the conversation today and looks forward to the answers to questions raised and the Committee will have another meeting about the issues raised and clarify the direction the Committee would like to take on these matters as well as have suggestions for the Transportation Committee.

Sen. Hickman put the Committee at ease at approximately 11:27am

## **Public Hearing on OPEGA Report: Evaluation of the Credit for Major Business Headquarters Expansions (MBHE)**

Sen. Hickman called the meeting back to order at approximately 11:39am.

Next, Sen. Hickman opened the Public Hearing on OPEGA's latest report: *Evaluation of the Credit for Major Business Headquarters Expansions*.

This report may be found here: [Evaluation of the Credit for Major Business Headquarters Expansions](#).

Sen. Hickman invited Geoff Baur from IDEXX to share with the Committee any testimony, noting IDEXX benefited from the Credit for Major Business Headquarters Expansions (MHBE).

Mr. Baur stated he resides in Portland, Maine and is present today to represent IDEXX Laboratories, adding he is the Vice President of Taxation for IDEXX. Mr. Baur stated he respected and appreciated the work OPEGA did on the report, noting it was thorough and appropriate. Mr. Baur stated he would be happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.

With no questions from the Committee, Sen. Hickman thanked Mr. Baur for being present today.

Next to testify was Albert Dimillo from Wells, Maine. Mr. Dimillo's written testimony may be found here: [Albert Dimillo Written Testimony](#)

Sen. Hickman thanked Mr. Dimillo for being here and asked if the Committee had any questions.

Rep. Lemelin asked Mr. Dimillo to explain his statement of "a law change that enabled IDEXX to get credits even though they failed to meet the 2017 law requirements".

Mr. Dimillo stated that IDEXX came forward and proposed a law change that was a 2023 law change, LD 1313, which he testified against, but the bill ultimately passed.

Rep. Lee asked Mr. Dimillo if he disagreed with OPEGA's recommendations in the Report.

Mr. Dimillo stated OPEGA did not look at whether the tax credit was a duplication.

With no further questions from the Committee, and no other individuals wishing to testify, Sen. Hickman closed the Public Hearing.

## **Work Session on OPEGA Report: Evaluation of the Credit for Major Business Headquarters Expansions (MBHE)**

Sen. Hickman next opened the Work Session on OPEGA's recent report entitled: *Evaluation of the Credit for Major Business Headquarters Expansions*

Sen. Hickman stated the purpose of the work session is for the Committee to vote on endorsement of the report, to officially transmit the report to the Taxation Committee and to decide what additional actions, if any, this Committee would like to take regarding the report. Sen. Hickman also welcomed OPEGA Senior Analyst Jennifer Henderson to answer any further questions the Committee may have.

### **Motion and Committee Vote**

Rep. Mastraccio made the motion to Accept the Report and transmit the report to the Taxation Committee.

The motion was seconded by Rep. Lee.

Sen. Hickman next asked if any members had further questions.

Sen. Farrin asked for OPEGA's response to the public hearing testimony suggesting a discrepancy between the report and the interpretation that there is duplication with the credit.

Ms. Henderson stated, regarding duplication, OPEGA did address apportionment briefly in the report, on page 11. Ms. Henderson stated, as a tax policy, Maine's use of single factor apportionment does provide benefits to a company that has a large physical presence here with a lot of out-of-state sales. Ms. Henderson also stated that in looking back through the public record, this concern has been brought to the attention of the Legislature a number of times starting in 2007, however the Legislature has not made changes to apportionment. OPEGA therefore did not come to the opinion that this credit was duplicative.

With no further Committee discussion on the motion, the vote was taken.

The motion was approved unanimously by all Committee Members who voted. (Ten members were present for the vote and one member later voted by absentee vote as allowed by Committee Rules and one member was absent.)

Sen. Hickman asked if the Committee had further discussion about the recommendations in the report.

Sen. Tipping stated that at the last meeting, the Committee had discussed reporting out legislation based on the recommendation in the report of increasing transparency around the use of multiple incentives through data collection, and that the Committee had asked OPEGA for recommendations for that legislation.

Sen. Hickman asked Ms. Henderson if she had some suggested language for a recommendation to the Legislature.



Ms. Henderson stated OPEGA did have a couple of ideas to share with the Committee, the first was to remind the Committee of LD 1107 which was carried over from the last session, noting section five of this LD which details an Incentive Data Task Force, which the Legislature could pass into law. Ms. Henderson stated the Incentive Data Task Force could be a great step forward however it is unknown how much progress that task force could make in trying to get centralized, readily available, standardized data the Legislature could use for oversight.

Sen. Tipping asked Ms. Henderson if there is a recommendation in currently proposed legislation that would be a direct data collection.

Ms. Henderson stated she was not aware of any currently before the Legislature.

Ms. Henderson stated the second idea OPEGA had for the Committee was a draft of a Resolve that would be directing an agency to develop a plan for centralizing data and bringing that plan to the Legislature at a future date. This draft may be found here: [Draft Bill Language](#)

Sen. Tipping stated he believes the Resolve is a more straightforward way to address the recommendation from the report.

Rep. Mastraccio stated she would like to see both the Department of Economic and Community Development and Maine Revenue Services be listed in the Resolve as the agencies to develop centralized data related to the use of business incentives.

After further Committee discussion, Sen. Hickman stated the final language on this Resolve needs to be worked on before taking a vote and asked members to put any additional thoughts on what the Resolve should be in an email to the entire Committee and the Director for inclusion in a draft which the Committee can take up at a future meeting.

## **Proposed Parameters for Three Upcoming OPEGA Tax Expenditure Reviews**

Sen. Hickman turned to the next item on the Agenda, Proposals from OPEGA regarding the next three Tax Expenditure Reviews, which are:

- The Deductions for Interest and Dividends on State and Local Securities;
- The Maine Earned Income Tax Credit; and
- The Credit for Affordable Housing.

Sen. Hickman stated that before OPEGA begins evaluating these tax expenditures, it is the responsibility of this Committee, after receiving public input, to establish the goals and metrics against which the expenditures' performance should be measured.

Sen. Hickman invited OPEGA Senior Analyst Kari Hojara to go through the proposed goals and metrics and answer any Committee questions.

Ms. Hojara stated that OPEGA has done some work to have a basic understanding of the Tax Expenditures up for review and will have a comprehensive understanding of the programs once the reviews have been completed.

Ms. Hojara went over the proposed evaluation parameters for the review of The Deductions for Interest and Dividends on State and Local Securities. This information may be found here: [Deductions for Interest and Dividends on Maine State and Local Securities Proposed Parameters](#)

Ms. Hojara next went over the proposed evaluation parameters for the review of The Maine Earned Income Tax Credit. This information may be found here: [Maine Earned Income Tax Credit Proposed Parameters](#)

Ms. Hojara then went over the proposed evaluation parameters for the review of The Credit for Affordable Housing. This information may be found here: [Credit for Affordable Housing Proposed Parameters](#)

Sen. Hickman next opened the Public Comment Period on the proposals for evaluation of these three Tax Expenditures.

Testimony received during the Public Comment Period may be found here: [Testimony on Upcoming OPEGA Tax Expenditure Reviews](#)

With no other individuals wishing to provide testimony, Sen. Hickman closed the Public Comment Period.

## **Proposed Scope of OPEGA Review: Maine Seed Potato Certification Program**

Next, Sen. Hickman invited OPEGA Director Peter Schleck to discuss OPEGA's proposed provisional scope of review for the Maine Seed Potato Certification Program.

Director Schleck went over the proposed provisional scoping of the OPEGA Review of the Maine Seed Potato Certification Program to the Committee for their consideration and approval detailed in a memo which can be found here: Memo from Director Schleck Re: [Proposed Provisional Scoping of OPEGA Review of Maine Seed Potato Certification Program](#)

Director Schleck stated this proposed scope is provisional, adding that it can be amended at any time, noting that during reviews a concern that is not on the scope could be found, noting that OPEGA would bring this to the Committee for further guidance and consideration.

Director Schleck stated that as this review was requested by the chairs of the Judiciary Committee, the scope was sent to them to review to make sure it covered all concerns raised in their request.

Director Schleck also stated OPEGA has reached out to the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to make sure they were aware this review would be taking place.

Sen. Hickman thanked Director Schleck for this provisional scop of work and asked if Committee members had any questions.

Rep. Lee stated a question he had for this program and would like added to the scope which is, what remedies exist if an inspection does not occur.

Sen. Timberlake stated he has heard of problems within the Program of inspectors being under the influence of drugs while conducting inspections, adding he is concerned about the Program failing because of lack of quality in the seed potatoes.

Following further Committee discussion Sen. Hickman asked if anyone would like to make a motion.

### **Motion and Committee Vote**

Sen. Farrin made the motion to approve the proposed provisional scoping of the OPEGA Review of the Maine Seed Potato Certification Program and add the following to the scope:

- a. What remedies exist if an inspection does not occur?
- b. How does the State ensure that inspectors are performing effective tests?

The motion was seconded by Rep. Perkins.

With no further discussion, the vote was taken.

The motion was approved unanimously by all Committee Members who voted. (Ten members were present for the vote, one member later voted by absentee vote as allowed by Committee Rules, and one member was absent.)

### **OPEGA Director's Report**

Sen. Hickman next invited Director Schleck to provide the Committee with his report and any other matters or items for the Committee's consideration.

Director Schleck provided the Committee a Memo from the Department of Health and Human Services of additional information regarding Freedom of Access Act & Child Welfare. That memo may be found here: [December 12, 2025 Memo from DHHS to GOC](#)

Sen. Hickman stated that if Committee members believe, after reading the additional information from DHHS, that there should be further discussion on this matter, to let the chairs know and it will be put on a future agenda.

Next, Director Schleck provided the Committee with the referral letter sent to the Committee on State and Local Government inviting them to consider whether any changes are warranted to the appearance of the conflict-of-interest provision of 5 M.R.S. § 18, in light of the matters set forth in the recent OPEGA report on the *Office of Cannabis Policy: Identification and Management of Conflicts of Interest in Procurement*. That letter may be found here: [Letter from GOC to SLG](#)

Director Schleck stated the next meeting is tentatively scheduled for January 9, 2026. Director Schleck stated during the January 9<sup>th</sup> meeting, he will present to the Committee OPEGA's annual report. Also at the January 9<sup>th</sup> meeting, Director Schleck will provide a summary of OPEGA's Current Work Plan. Director Schleck also provided the Committee a list of tentative meeting dates for 2026.

## **Adjourn**

With no further discussion and without objection, Sen. Hickman adjourned the Government Oversight Committee at approximately 12:45 pm.