

March 18, 2019

Dear Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee of Appropriations and Financial Affairs and

Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee of Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement & Business.

My name is Scott Berk. I am a business and property owner in downtown Norway. I am also the Chair of Norway's Main Street Affiliate program, Norway Downtown, and have been on its board of directors since 2009. Norway has been a participant in the Main Street program since 2003. Norway Downtown is an all-volunteer 501(c)(3) downtown organization that implements a comprehensive approach to downtown revitalization with the support of downtown merchants, the municipality, and residents. We use the National Main Street Center's approach and are supported, trained, and coached by the Maine Downtown Center, the coordinator of the program here in Maine.

The Covid-19 Pandemic of 2020/2021 has shown us the importance of community like no other event in recent history. I believe that one of the most important aspects of creating and maintaining a vibrant and sustainable community is having a thriving, economically resilient downtown. The Main Street America program in general and the Maine Main Street program (which is administered by the Maine Downtown Center (MDC), a program of the Maine Development Foundation (MDF)) is one of the most effective programs in revitalizing and maintaining economically vibrant downtowns. If you look around Maine many of the towns and cities that have weathered the pandemic the best are a part of Maine's Main Street Program.

This program has guided Norway in many aspects of our downtown's successful revitalization and redevelopment effort, including the ongoing restoration of The Norway Opera House, filling our Main Street (there are no current available vacancies) with thriving, small, locally owned businesses, trail connectivity for walkers and bikers to downtown and preserving our beautiful and unique historic downtown building, which is a guiding principle of any downtown revitalization effort. Norway Downtown values and benefits from the services that the Maine Downtown Center provides. Our volunteers, local merchants and organizational leadership, have training opportunities on a regular basis through the MDC.

We value and thank you for your past support of the MDF and MDC and we hope you will continue your support.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott Berk', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Scott Berk
Chair of Norway Downtown
Co-Chair MDC Advisory Council