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**Sent:** Monday, August 9, 2021 6:42 PM

**To:** Legislative Advisory Committee on the State House

**Subject:** Advisory\_Committee\_on\_State\_House\_Draft\_Report

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to provide my written feedback on the draft report as I will again be unable to attend the meeting tomorrow, as I'm back in Maine picking my daughter up from camp and visiting a few colleges along the way. (The ad-hoc means by which our meetings were scheduled does not work for summer parenting schedules!) As the report currently stands, I would not be able to support it, and would vote "no" if I were in attendance. (I did see that Ellen sent out an updated version today, but she said the changes were minor.) While I will be absent for final deliberations and voting, I still hope at least some improvements that I would like to see can be made. Here are my comments:

1) Recommendations 1 & 2 should be revisited given the surge in cases and the evolution of vaccine requirements. While I reluctantly voted to support a motion to "strongly encourage" rather than require vaccinations, I would not do so today. I think vaccinations should be required for anyone working regularly in the State House, including members, staff, press, and lobbyists (with medical exemptions of course). Many, many public and private locations are now requiring vaccinations. I also think we should ask members of the public to attest to their vaccination status and wear a mask if they are not vaccinated. Since it's too late for this committee to revisit this topic, I think our recommendation should be that Joint Rules and JLMC revisit this topic closer to the session. I feel very uncomfortable making the recommendation not requiring vaccinations.

2) There seems to be no mention of our discussion and vote about committees using space outside the State House. In our early meetings, we discussed using the Pavilion Building or other space for committee meetings. I was very in favor of expanding the space available to legislators and legislative staff outside the State House. We took a vote on restricting committee work to the State House and I was the only one to vote "no." While I was clearly in the minority, I think it's important that the minority voice be represented because I am certain that other legislators feel the same -- we need more space to make the State House safe and comfortable, and this is a missed opportunity to experiment with meeting physically outside the State House. Nearly every other legislature in the country uses legislative meeting space and office space outside their state houses, and we should be able to do so as well. I would like this opinion reflected in the report.

3) As I expressed at the end of our last meeting, I felt very uncomfortable with the nature and details of the conversation last week about where specific staff members' work spaces would be located. The discussion used individual staff member names,

titles, and details about their work duties and product. Not only did the discussion stray into areas not in our jurisdiction (we are not the direct supervisors of these staff members!), but it struck me as discussing personnel issues in a public meeting, one that was being live-streamed, no less. The specific decisions about where and how individual staffers do their work should be left up to supervisors. Our discussions should be general and non-personal. For example, I think it's appropriate to recommend that the legislative operations staff be moved to different office space within the State House and 2/4 Aiken, but not appropriate to be recommending detailed locations. We're not recommending which committees be in which rooms, we're leaving that up to Leadership. Similarly, we should not be recommending where individual staff members be located - that should be up to supervisors. At the very least, please remove any mention of staff names or titles from the report so that it is more generic in its recommendations.

4) We had long discussions about how and whether we would limit the number of people in individual committee rooms and whether we would adhere to the air flow/ASHRAE limits. I don't see any recommendations regarding the ability to limit the # of people in a room. I would like to see a recommendation about guidance for chairs so that they can limit the # of people in a room, and have a standard to follow by which to do so. I hope that my own chairs will limit the # of people in a room because even before COVID, there were times when I did not feel that it was safe or healthy to have our committee rooms so full. We need to be able to address this and have a standard and guidance by which to do so.

There are other changes I would make in the report -- overall I think it gets into a lot of unnecessary weeds without addressing some bigger more pressing issues -- but the four points above are my primary concerns at this stage in our work. Thank you for your consideration of my concerns in my absence. I assume you'll vote on a final report tomorrow, so please do note that I was not able to be present to vote due to a family conflict. Thanks again.

My best,  
Ruth

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