In response to Rep. Pierce’s questions:

1. State-owned space

The State’s major hub of owned space is in the Greater Augusta area (Augusta, Hallowell, Vassalboro), with close to 2 million square feet of employee-occupied space in 54 buildings. DAFS manages these facilities.

The Controller’s Office, Risk Management Division, maintains a list of 4,200 facilities throughout the State, specifying the agency responsible for them. These range from docks to fish hatcheries. The list includes buildings under the Community College System, the University of Maine System, Maine Maritime Academy and all agencies, and can be sorted for areas of interest.

Buildings at the Dorothea Dix Psychiatric Center comprise about 400,000 square feet, with 200,000 used for psychiatric treatment and the balance either vacant or managed by the BGS Leased Space Division.

2. Leased space

The Division of Leased Space is currently administering 269 active leases for office, warehouse, garage, storage, tower and training purposes—in the service of 37 state agencies, and across 68 different municipalities and 5 unorganized territories. The Division’s leasing portfolio includes 1,748,398 square feet of leased space (excluding towers and associated access roads and rights of way.

A list of municipalities where State leases are located is attached.

3. Is State office space under-utilized?

Leased space is not underutilized; rather, it is carefully managed. If an agency finds that it has excess space, the lease will be amended to reduce square footage or when renewed, the footprint will be reduced in size. In some cases, agencies will relocate to smaller facilities or co-locate in other agency buildings.

In State-owned space, the BGS space management office is constantly looking for empty cubicles or other spaces for temporary employees, interns, contractors and the like. Such space is difficult to find. Space is not underutilized, as it is constantly evaluated for efficient “fit” with agency program needs. On the contrary, many agencies work in overcrowded spaces.

An overwhelming percentage of State employees have teleworked during the pandemic. Accordingly, many State owned, and leased buildings were not fully occupied during the past year. Lower occupancy gave DAFS the opportunity to study several overcrowded agency spaces. One agency had such a successful experience with telework that the number of workstations was reduced permanently, and the square footage occupied by the agency decreased. This provided an opportunity to move employees from other severely overcrowded space into the newly available space.

If some telework continues post-pandemic, it will relieve stressed, cramped workspaces and provide some “breathing room.” It should be noted that even if agencies allow a percentage of employees to telework, they will continue to need a “travel” office (shared with others) at their home office for office days.