



Senator Joe Baldacci

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Good afternoon Senator Grohoski, Representative Cloutier, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Taxation. My name is Joe Baldacci, and I am privileged to represent Senate District 9, which consists of Bangor and Hermon. I am here to testify in support of my bill, **LD 237, "An Act to Increase the Percentage of Funds Provided to Municipalities Through State-Municipal Revenue Sharing."**

The number one concern of hundreds of thousands of Maine homeowners is the escalating hikes in local property taxes all around the State. In Bangor and around Maine fairly aggressive property reevaluations are underway and we, as legislators, need to address these concerns in a meaningful way.

In this legislative session I am offering my colleagues a variety of possible tools to meaningfully respond to the property tax burden. Particularly important is the plight of our seniors. Studies have shown that the median income of Maine seniors still living in their own home is less than \$50,000 per year. In addition, Maine seniors are more likely to be widowed and living alone than in many other states. Seniors being able to live independently and to age in their own home is good for them, good for their families and good for our communities.

We need a remedy that does not require seniors to file taxes in order to get it as many of them are exempt or have income exempt. My bill, LD 237, before you is one such meaningful tax relief tool. It would increase the state's commitment to municipal revenue sharing by 10 % next year and 10% the year after.

I will be offering an amendment to the bill, with leave of the Committee, to amend the bill to make it that the increased monies will only go to municipalities that have adopted a tax cap on levies on seniors in their primary residence of a maximum annual increase of 2 % per year.

It is important to me and I am sure to all of my colleagues that additional resources to communities need to be met by suitable fiscal restraints by town governments. Also this would create a voluntary option for municipalities not a mandate and would deliver real relief and less anxiety to Maine's seniors.

I will be offering later this session a Constitutional Amendment to mandate a 2 % tax cap and a bipartisan bill to incrementally increase the homestead exemption to \$95,000 of a primary residence's value. I would ask this Committee to workshop these property tax relief bills and others together in order for the Committee to adopt a clear message as to what we can do to help Maine homeowners. I believe the public is looking for answers and not excuses and they are looking at all of us to do just that.

Joseph M. Baldacci

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph M. Baldacci". The signature is written in a cursive style.

State Senator

District 9 Bangor and Hermon