

Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

Neither For Nor Against

LD 353 - *Resolve, to Establish the Commission to Recommend Methods for Preventing Deed Fraud in the State*

February 12, 2025

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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Rebecca Graham, and I am submitting testimony on behalf of the Maine Municipal Association's Legislative Policy Committee (LPC) neither for nor against LD 353, with some feedback received from LPC members through a poll in between our official meetings where firm positions are established. This feedback may be helpful as you debate the merits of this bill. Officials were generally supportive but not enough responses were received before this public hearing to adopt a firm position. If a position is established before the work session on this bill, I will submit additional testimony at that time

Officials report they have had residents reach out to them with concerns about deed fraud and not able to access the notification systems offered by county deed registries because they usually require an email address. Many communities do not have equal access to the internet and many residents that may find themselves targets of such attempts are not digitally literate or able to access electronic notification systems.

Some officials are concerned that remote notarization may play a role in deed fraud and addressing the situations where it may be prohibited from use could be an important point for the commission to evaluate. Officials are generally support of efforts to dive down into complex issues and in this make tangible efforts to protect victims of fraud. However, they are concerned about the value of another commission if the reports from those commissions are continually ignored, as they routinely are. The timeline for study and reporting out legislation and how delayed action may impact victims was an additional concern.

If there are potential solutions already known by committee members, officials hope that you will consider adopting them this session, including nominal protections like mandatory prosecutions for such intentionally egregious acts. Currently, crimes against property are too often considered deferable by overwhelmed district attorneys, while the harms inflicted particularly on low-income victims can be devastating to their physical and emotional health.

As residents are contacting town offices and officials with questions around these types of crimes, the Association and its members thank you in advance for any additional public education efforts you may be able to support as well.