



Maine County Commissioners Association

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LD 358, An Act to Increase Fees Paid to Registers of Deeds

February 24, 2025

Chair Baldacci, Chair Salisbury, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government, on behalf of the Maine County Commissioners Association, we appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony to the Committee in support of LD 358.

About MCCA. Briefly, the Maine County Commissioners Association was established in 1890 to assist Maine's county government in providing vital services to Maine citizens in a responsive, efficient, and credible manner. The Association is based in Augusta, represents all of Maine's 16 counties, and is governed by a board with representation from each participating county.

What does LD 358 do? LD 358 would increase the fees paid to a county register of deeds for receiving, recording, and indexing any instrument to \$45 per instrument. The bill also increases the fee charged for making paper copies of plans to \$10 per page and increases the surcharge a register of deeds may collect to \$5 per document. Additionally, LD 358 changes the threshold under which no fee is charged for acquiring electronic images, printed images, or electronic abstracts to 100 images or abstracts in a calendar year. After 100 images or abstracts, a person is charged fifty cents per image or abstract. The bill also prohibits the sale of images or abstracts by persons who download 1000 or more images or abstracts.

Discussion. Registers of Deeds provide critical services to Maine communities, and it is important that the fee structure for these critical services align with the manner in which these services are utilized today. Notably, the existing fee structure has not increased since 2013, and after twelve years, it makes sense to revisit the fee structure to ensure it keeps pace with inflation and is fair. In this regard, we support the principle behind LD 358 to ensure sufficient fees, but we defer to the Registers of Deeds and other stakeholders with regard to how those fees are best structured.

MCCA also notes that fees paid to the Registry of Deeds help support the important functions of county government, including maintenance of county jails, critical law enforcement services provided by county sheriffs, and needed emergency management services. If the fees paid to the Registries of Deeds do not keep pace with inflation, the contributions made to county government will decline as a percentage of county revenues and the shortfall will need to be made up through local property taxes. In short, if the fees paid to Registries of Deeds do not increase, local property taxpayers will end up paying more in taxes.

As a final note, in supporting LD 358, we recognize that increased fees may burden specific classes of users, including municipal government. If the fees paid by municipalities go up, the costs will ultimately fall to the local property taxpayer. With this in mind, MCCA would support further modifications to the bill to ease burdens on local municipalities.

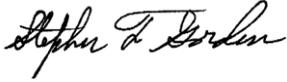
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Conclusion. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of LD 358. Thank you, and if you have questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Respectfully submitted,



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cc: Commissioner Andre Cushing, President, MCCA