

Testimony in Support of

LD 1481: An Act to Amend the Law Governing Stabilization of Property Taxes on Homesteads of Individuals 65 Years of Age or Older

April 15, 2025

Chairpersons Senator Grohoski and Representative Cloutier and honorable members of the Taxation Committee:

My name is Kerry Leichtman. I am a Certified Maine Assessor serving the jurisdictions of Camden and Rockport. I am testifying today in qualified support of LD 1481.

LD 1481 makes an honest effort to correct the problems with the former stabilization bill, LD 290. It limits the assistance to a reasonable income level, it increases the residency requirement to 20 years, thus insuring the relief is targeted to Maine residents who have lived and owned property in the state for a significant portion of their lives, and while it allows an applicant to retain their eligibility when moving to a new homestead in a different municipality, the new homestead's tax is to be frozen at the level it will be for their first tax year there.

My support is qualified because the burden of securing proof of the 20-year residency must be placed on the applicant. Assessing offices were paralyzed by the task of running down proof for 10 years' residency for LD 290. While our offices were preoccupied with this task, our other constituents were being short-changed. We did not have time to deal with anything else.

Improvements, other than standard wear and tear fixes, made to the property must be accounted for and added to the assessments. And finally, applicants should not be made to file anything annually. We would not want to remove someone from the program simply because they forgot to file with us one year. We don't need an affidavit, we will know if the applicant no longer owns the property.

My other reservations are (1) that relief aimed at younger residents of the state, especially young families, still needs to be addressed – I fear if this is enacted, there would be nothing left for them, other than the bill to pay for senior stabilization – and (2) that we can't afford it.

But those considerations are your purview, not mine. My role is offer testimony from my professional perspective as an assessor. Representative Parry's bill does a good job meeting the objectives of and objections to LD 290. I appreciate that he took in what was wrong with LD 290 and made a sincere attempt to address them. For that, and the other reasons stated, I offer my support.

Thank you for considering my testimony.