

Testimony in Opposition to
LD 1541: An Act to Provide Property Tax Relief for Senior Residents
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 opposition to LD 1541.

It's hard to imagine how a bill as flawed as the previous stabilization bill, known as LD 290, could be made worse, but here it is. LD 1541 doesn't freeze property taxes. It eliminates them for Maine residents who are at least 65 years old. Again, there is no income limitation, no attempt to target relief to those who truly need assistance. The exemption can still be transferred from one municipality to another, though new language creates a simple hoop the applicant must skip through – notice I didn't say jump through, it's not that much of a hurdle. The assessors must still do the legwork that crippled our offices for months to prove 10 years' residency. And each year the applicant must supply an affidavit stating they haven't got any younger, that they are still 65 or over.

I say "they" when I should say "we." I am over 65 and would benefit from this bill. So yes, sure eliminate my property taxes. I'm not wealthy and can afford to pay my share but I won't if I don't have to.

So now the state is not just reimbursing the growth in property taxes, but is financing the entire tax bill and municipalities will be reimbursed at 100%. How can this be considered a serious proposal?

Seniors and the elderly should not be used as pawns in a game of political chicken. But that's what this is.

The bill also says that OPEGA should report to the 135th Legislature in 2031 about whether the program has been successful in relieving seniors of the tax burden, and whether the program is fiscally sustainable.

I can save you the wait. Yes, to the first question and No to the second.

Thank you for considering my testimony.