

Testimony in Opposition to
LD 1630: An Act to Amend the Open Space Tax Law
April 24, 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 1630.

The Open Space current use program is in need of serious reconsideration. The program in its current form is so open ended it's more of a tax dodge than the conservation tool it is meant to be. LD 1630 provides no clarity, closes no loopholes and adds complexity to the program. The existing Open Space categories are heavily edited or removed. One such edit is increasing the minimum Open Space category, which was previously called Ordinary Open Space from a 20% discount to 45%. Ordinary Open Space is one of the existing program's most notorious aspects. Rather than eliminate it, this property tax give-away is increased 125%.

LD 1630 adds a wildlife management program that is written either by a forester or a wildlife biologist from the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. The plan must be updated every ten years, and be approved by a licensed forester. LD 1630 also calls for a forest climate resilience and carbon management plan that, for some reason, must be kept confidential; it is to be reviewed by a forester and updated every ten years. And even though a substantial tax break is given for participation in these new aspects of the current use program, assessors are not involved in reviewing and approving the plans.

Yet in contradiction to that, section 1114 states the landowner may remain in the program until the assessor determines otherwise.

This is a confused bill. Rather than add value to the program it creates more reasons to do a total overhaul of it.

Thank you for considering my testimony.