

Ian Lynch
Waterville
LD 2106

Rev. Ian Lynch
Waterville, Maine
January 28, 2026

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and esteemed members of the committee. My name is Ian Lynch, and I live in Waterville, where I am pastor of First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ. I respectfully testify in support of LD 2160: An Act to Prohibit the Disclosure of Nonpublic Records Without Proper Judicial Review.

As a pastor, my desire is to invite all into our communal space, but that is balanced by an impulse to protect those who are vulnerable among us. Six days a month, our congregation serves our community by offering hygiene and cleaning items free of charge to any of our neighbors in need. A portion of those whom we serve are immigrants. At the moment we are experiencing a good deal of anxiety about attempting to help without putting people at risk.

The space where people gather in our building is called a sanctuary. Clearly that term is not limited to religious use. It literally means to be set aside for a specific use. In our case, we consider that use holy. A wildlife sanctuary is no less holy. Indeed providing any space that protects those at risk is the holy work of creating sanctuary.

This bill intends to create such spaces. That is why I support it, with a plea to improve it by amending it to include houses of worship. It could be argued that our spaces are already protected by our constitutional right to freely practice our religion. But rather than ask a judge after the fact to rule on whether charitable outreach is a protected religious activity, simply including our churches, synagogues, and other places of worship in the legislation would be a great help in the work to serve and protect the least of these, our siblings.

I am grateful for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I urge you to amend this bill and recommend it to the full legislature. Thank you!