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Testimony of Rep. Sean Faircloth presenting

LD 2121, An Act to Enhance the Safety of Judicial and Elected Officials, Constitutional Officers and the State Auditor by Allowing Certain Personal Information to Be Removed from Designated Public Records

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Sean Faircloth, and I represent House District 24, which includes Veazie and parts of Bangor, Brewer and Orono. I am here today to present **LD 2121, An Act to Enhance the Safety of Judicial and Elected Officials, Constitutional Officers and the State Auditor by Allowing Certain Personal Information to Be Removed from Designated Public Records.**

When I served on this committee, it would never have crossed my mind to introduce this bill, but the world has in fact changed. Scores of states have grappled with laws addressing the violent issue before you today.

Today, in collaboration with the Maine Judicial Branch, I offer a vehicle for increased safety for those carrying out their civic duty. I urge this committee to take this bill and craft legislation making home addresses of judges and elected officials less accessible via public records and data-brokers.

Why?

The United States Marshal Service tallied 179 serious threats against judges in 2019, 224 in 2021, 457 in 2023, 509 in 2024, 564 in 2025.

In 2024, there were bomb threats on the homes of two of our Maine legislative colleagues.

The Speaker has also recently faced a bomb threat on his home.

In a quarter of the United States, judges have been violently assaulted or killed.

This bill is based on a straightforward principle: judges, legislators, constitutional officers and the State Auditor are public officials, and their official interactions occur in public. When a citizen interacts with a public official, they discuss different types of issues, but there is nothing about either these interactions that needs to happen at the place where a judge's child lives, or a legislator's spouse lives. Yes, judges and elected official have a duty to interact with the public, but nothing about their duty necessitates interaction at their home.

District 24: Veazie and parts of Bangor, Brewer and Orono

The homes of public officials are not the place for official interactions. Homes are where public officials should be able to let their guard down and not fear a violent interaction with an angry member of the public.

The legislation before you was inspired in part by Judge Esther Salas of New Jersey. See, there was a man who wanted to meet Judge Salas. He wanted to meet her so he could kill her. He simply looked her up and got her home address on the internet. The killer was proud to call himself anti-feminist. After obtaining her home address, he rang the Judge's doorbell, and her son Daniel answered. Daniel was shot dead as he tried to protect his parents, and his father was also badly injured by the gunman but survived. As a result of this terrible tragedy, Daniel's parents spearheaded what became Daniel's Law in New Jersey which is now a federal law empowering people like judges and elected officials to request that the government keep their home address private, and that data brokers not disclose their home addresses for profit.

Some might call Texas, Florida, Georgia and Idaho red states. California, New Mexico, Washington State, Hawaii and New York might be called blue states. They all have various laws providing that judges and legislators need not have their home address easily accessible online.

Most know the name of Minnesota House Speaker Melissa Hortman who was assassinated in her home on June 14, 2025. He also killed her husband and dog. Minnesota State Senator John Hoffman and his wife Yvette Hoffman were both also victims of an assassination attempt on June 14, 2025, by the same man. John and Yvette survived after they were shot nine and eight times, respectively.

The assassin got home addresses of the Speaker and State Senator from a data-broker site.

Representative government should be a celebration of democracy, a joyful process, yet, according to a recent Brennan Center survey, 40% of state legislators said they were less interested in running for reelection or higher office because of hostile emails and hostile voicemails. For women, about half were subject to verbal or written assaults that discouraged them from public life. Being in elective office is an opportunity to serve, to help others. Maine needs mechanisms in place that encourage public service while protecting public officials.

Some options: Georgia is "opt in" in the sense that legislators and judges must request their home address be removed from public facing websites.

A New Jersey court found Daniel's Law constitutional because it's "expressly limited to discrete categories of current and former public officials" are "at particular risk."

Home addresses are simply not the basis of a legitimate public interest.

Please note here in Maine our Capitol Police report threats against state lawmakers doubled from 23 in 2023 to 53 in 2024 then more than doubled again to 111 in 2025.

The Florida legislature gives judges and legislators the option to have their home address removed from public records. Governor Ron DeSantis signed this law. Governor Gavin Newsom signed a law permitting removal of personal information from data-broker websites. Texas, Oregon and Vermont have opt-out laws applying to data-brokers.

Justin Sherman, an Electronic Privacy scholar states, “data brokers, and...people search websites, have enabled horrific violence...by aggregating and selling data on people and their families.”

I began by discussing my love of this committee, and the intellectually challenging issues this committee faces.

The issue I’ve placed before you is not a comfortable topic, increasing violence in our civic life, but this bill is a path to in part address it. Tackling tough issues is the greatest part of being in this room and the best education there is.

I loved college, I got to study a year abroad in Ireland, I even loved law school, all wonderful educations. But no education ever matched the learning right here in this room, listening to ideas around this horseshoe, then the best part, learning how to and then taking thoughtful steps to, address problems. This is best education ever.

And from that vigorous learning discussion, from that positive work, we find even judges, even legislators, need a home to go home to, see family, feel safe and recharge, in a home that need not be a fortress, so that we may return to a civic space to do the people’s business.