



Testimony before the Committee on Judiciary

LD 2176 An Act To Safeguard Personal Information and Strengthen Tenant Rights in Maine

March 11, 2026

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Members of the Committee:

I am Rev. Jane Field, a resident of Portland, an ordained Presbyterian (PCUSA) minister, and the Executive Director of the Maine Council of Churches, a coalition of seven Protestant denominations (Episcopal, Lutheran (ELCA), Presbyterian (PCUSA), Quaker, Unitarian Universalist, United Methodist and United Church of Christ) who represent more than 400 local congregations in Maine with over 50,000 members in their care. The Maine Council of Churches **supports** LD 2176.

You may have heard of **Dietrich Bonhoeffer**, a Christian theologian and pastor who led the Confessing Church in Germany during the 1930's and 1940's and who was **executed by the Nazis for his work opposing their regime and its hatred that pitted neighbor against neighbor**, a regime that encouraged landlords, next door neighbors, coworkers, even family members to turn on the people closest to them and turn them in to the authorities. Because of his faith, Bonhoeffer had the courage to speak out against these horrors and to call on his fellow Germans to reject that regime and instead to love their neighbors as themselves.

As the saying goes, **history doesn't repeat itself—it rhymes**. While there are important and significant differences between Bonhoeffer's situation over 80 years ago and the situation we find ourselves in today in the United States, there are also important and significant similarities. In fact, **many in the faith community are calling this a "Bonhoeffer moment"—a moment when we are challenged to speak with courage about what is right and what is wrong, about the divine mandate to stand with and for the vulnerable, the persecuted, the marginalized, the weak, and the oppressed, about how we answer the 2,000-year-old question, "And who is my neighbor?"** (And then, what we do based on how we answer that question.)

Another era in U.S. history that "rhymes" with what we are experiencing today is **the era of the Fugitive Slave Act, 1850-1861, when our forebears in New England were faced with a question of their own: would they cooperate or resist?** Would they betray the fugitives from slavery living here in the North, or would they protect them? I am proud that **our Maine State Legislature, led by the Republican majority, enacted strong Personal Liberty Laws which restricted the ability of local officials to aid in the capture of those running away from their enslavers. Friends, we are facing a similar moment in Maine history today.**

All of our work at the Council is grounded in **the central biblical value of love of neighbor**. That includes our work advocating for public policies that ensure the well-being of all of our neighbors, especially those most at risk of being harmed by those among us who seek to dehumanize, torture, and remove anyone they deem as unworthy of being called a 'neighbor.'

LD 2176 is one such policy. By preventing landlords from violating the privacy of their tenants by disclosing their personal information without their consent (with exceptions for cases where there is a judicial warrant or other exigent circumstances, of course), it would protect vulnerable people such as domestic violence survivors, victims of human trafficking, asylum seekers and other immigrants from being "outed" to those seeking to do them harm.

Our neighbors deserve to feel safe from danger in their own homes. **The fact that we currently have no statutory language to protect tenants from landlords who want to intimidate them or to cooperate with those who wish to do them harm is deeply troubling. This bill addresses that glaring policy gap.**

For all these reasons, the Maine Council of Churches urges you to vote "Ought To Pass" on LD 2176.

*Episcopal Diocese of Maine, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterian Church (USA),
Religious Society of Friends, Unitarian Universalist Association, United Church of Christ, United Methodist Church*

Jane Field
Maine Council of Churches
LD 2176

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