



Valerie J Moon, CMA
City Assessor

Dear Senators and Representative:

I am Valerie Moon, life-long resident of Surry, Maine. I am the City Assessor for the City of Brewer. I have 15 years of assessing experience and started my municipal career in Ellsworth. I currently hold the State of Maine designation of CMA II and am an instructor with the International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO). I serve on the board of the Maine Association of Assessing Officers and the education committee for the IAAO.

I support S.P 69, sponsored by Senator Bennett more than any other bill I have seen on the calendar today. It creates equity amongst Maine's older residents and gives them better understanding of how much relief they are getting. It also protects younger residents the Senior Stabilization Program has no boundaries as it stands right now and there are so many bills this session to allow more properties to be eligible. Properties no longer owned by residents 65 and over, properties in irrevocable trust and life tenancies, and to allow limited liability companies which are entities not residents to receive the homestead exemption. This tax burden shift will force younger residents to leave and our economy will stagnate if we continue to shift the tax burden on to those who are under 65 years of age. Our schools and municipal services are supported by property taxation. Towns are going to be forced to make tough decisions to cut services when the Legislature only reimburses 50% of the taxes lost from stabilization. I have estimated that Brewer is looking at between 80 and 90 thousand dollars in reimbursement in FY24. If the state only reimburses half of that loss it has to come from somewhere, it is a full-time employee's salary without benefits, it's a program or service we can no longer offer. That number is only going to increase; I cannot imagine what the reimbursements will look like on Mount Desert Island.

The repeal of 36 MRS §6281, to replace it with a more equal option that does not require annual applications and 15 minutes of paperwork for each application makes much more sense for everyone involved. Whether that be a graduated homestead exemption based on year of residency or just an age cut off.

I do not like to see wasted resources. I know that Senator Stewart had the best intentions when he sponsored LD290 but it landed way off the target. It allows wealthy tax payers to avoid paying taxes they can afford and it has created an administrative nightmare for everyone involved, municipal employees and residents alike.

I would ask this committee to thoroughly consider all of the bills relating to 36 MRS §6281 before sending any to a vote in the house or senate. These decisions have serious consequences and last year's bill was not thought out.

Thank you for your time and attention.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact our office at any time.

Sincerely:

Valerie J. Moon
City Assessor