



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 am expressing my support for H.P 334, sponsored by Representative Poirier of Skowhegan. The need for taxpayers to complete the stabilization application annually has created a tremendous amount of anxiety amongst older residents and that creates far more work for municipal employees. I am not saying that I do not want to see my older residents, they are welcome to come to my office at any time but I hate to see them coming in worried because they fear they have missed a deadline and are going to lose the ability to stabilize.

In Brewer, we have processed 500 applications this first year for stabilization. I expect that next year we will have 100 more. Some of the larger municipalities have 1500 or more of these applications. This process of confirming 10 years of residency, homestead and the stabilized amount of tax takes staff time. I am very fortunate, I have staff some small municipalities have an assessing agent one day per month for a few hours. We were able to set other projects aside to handle the stabilization applications in time to send out the required approval notice in a timely manner.

The cost of employee time to process hundreds of applications each year is an unfunded mandate that will hurt larger municipalities and will put a strangle hold small municipalities. There are so many more important projects that large and small municipalities need to focus on.

I want to say that this bill is preferable to S.P. 29, sponsored by Senator Pouliot as it requires accountability on the part of the taxpayer or the taxpayer's estate when they are no longer eligible for the homestead exemption.

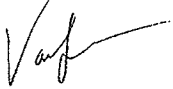
As a taxpayer and a tax assessor I am in no way in favor of senior property tax stabilization. In fact, I did not have my own father complete the application because he does not need other residents to pay his taxes, we do that for him. We planned for our parents to age in place, my family moved in with my parents just as my parents moved in with my great aunt when I was 4 years old. That is the New England way of life. There has to be a better way, I am in favor of a graduated homestead exemption for property owners who can show they have owned a homestead in Maine for years or generations.

The more years they have been a part of the Maine economy should be rewarded.

I would also like to issue an open invitation to any and all legislators to reach out to either of the Maine assessing organizations before legislation is passed to understand how it will affect taxpayers before a vote is taken. As assessors we can tell you how it will change the everyday tasks in our office and how it will affect all Maine residents not just the group being targeted for relief.

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

Sincerely:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Val', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Valerie J. Moon
City Assessor