



January 23, 2024

**Testimony to the 131<sup>st</sup> Maine Legislature**

**Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business**

Good afternoon, Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and honorable members of the Committee – my name is Josh Steirman and I am the Director of Government Relations for the Maine Bankers Association. We are the state-wide trade association representing Maine's banks and our membership includes twenty-nine banks active across the state of Maine. The association advocates for Maine's banks and their critical role in a vibrant, stable, and inclusive economy. Our banks employ over 9,000 Mainers, provide safe and secure deposit services for our communities, and are a critical source of financing for home-ownership and small businesses. Last year, our banks provided over \$4.7 billion in business loans, and another \$4.6 billion in residential real estate loans.

The Maine Bankers Association is testifying today in opposition to L.D. 2062, *An Act to Amend the Laws Governing Real Estate Appraisers and Appraisal Management Companies*.

Real estate appraisal is a regulated industry which is necessary for a functioning marketplace. Appraisers are required to adhere to strict professional standards, affirming their essential role as unbiased professionals rooted in sound methods and expertise. However the bill under consideration today would undermine the integrity and public trust in this critical profession: we see no compelling reason why an oversight board should be exempted from the very rules they are charged with enforcing.

Lenders and real estate professionals in Maine generally agree there is a longstanding and worsening shortage of qualified appraisers in Maine, particularly in rural areas. This dearth of appraisers creates yet another obstacle in our state's challenge to identify affordable housing opportunities, with which the committee members are well acquainted. However, instead of addressing this very matter of pressing public concern and searching for pathways to a more robust community of accredited appraisers, L.D. 2062 would degrade the professional standards of the board which oversees appraisers in Maine. It is ironic that rather than addressing real and pressing policy needs, this bill works in the opposite direction and would erode trust in the professionalism of licensed appraisers.

We hope that testimony today has sparked an interest in the topic of appraisal regulation, and that perhaps this discussion will inspire productive legislation and reform in the next Legislature. We thank the Committee for its consideration and are happy to answer any questions.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joshua Steirman

Director of Government Relations