

MAINE BANKERS

Association

March 4, 2024

**Testimony to the 131st Maine Legislature
Committee on Judiciary**

Good afternoon, Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, 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. 2240, *An Act to Implement Protections Against Deed Fraud*.

Bankers support strong protections against fraud, and we believe in protecting the integrity of real property recordings in Maine. However, we are concerned that this bill as currently drafted will have significant unintended consequences that will harm Maine people.

Our primary concern is the requirement that instruments be recorded before a Maine notary. Real estate transactions are routinely completed by mail when a party cannot physically be present in Maine for the closing, and documents are lawfully notarized by notaries authorized in other states. Disallowing this very common practice will handicap the ability of Maine people to complete routine transactions.

Generally, we are concerned about additional barriers to real estate transactions, particularly at a time when many across our state have cited an acute housing shortage. There have been many laudable efforts to encourage talented workforce to move to Maine, but this bill would unfortunately undercut those efforts. We hear of families excited about work opportunities in Maine who postpone a move due to challenges finding affordable housing. This bill would create more barriers in attracting those families.

Recognizing that fraud is a pressing and legitimate concern, we would support a broader conversation with an array of stakeholders to more appropriately address the issue of deed fraud.

We thank the Committee for its consideration and are happy to answer any questions.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joshua Steirman
Director of Government Relations