



March 4, 2024

Senator Anne Carney
Chair - Joint Committee on Judiciary
100 State House Station, Rm 438
Augusta, ME 04333

Representative Matt Moonen
Chair - Joint Committee on Judiciary
100 State House Station, Rm 438
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: SUPPORT, SP 960 (INGWERSEN) PROTECTIONS AGAINST DEED FRAUD

Dear Senate Chair Carney and House Chair Moonen,

On behalf of our Maine based members, I am writing to express our support for the amendment to Section 9 of 33 MRSA §203, as outlined in SP 960 currently under consideration. This amendment, which requires instruments affecting real property to be notarized by an in-state notarial officer, is a responsible step towards protecting Maine residents from the recent rise in reported deed fraud.

Deed fraud is a serious issue that can have devastating consequences for individuals and families. By stipulating that instruments affecting title to real property in the state be acknowledged before a Maine notarial officer, this amendment will help to mitigate the risks associated with fraudulent activities. It ensures that the notarization process remains transparent, accountable, and subject to Maine's rigorous standards, thereby safeguarding the interests of Maine's residents.

Further, this bill will help to preserve the livelihoods of Maine notaries through increased demand for their local services. In recent years, we have witnessed a trend of technology companies attempting to consolidate notarial services for the real estate industry and funnel it through online notary farms located in states with lower costs and weaker standards. This practice not only undermines the integrity of the Office of Notary Public but also puts Maine residents at risk.

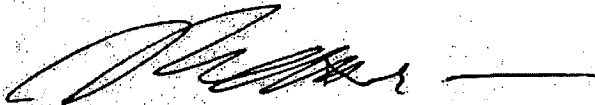
We applaud the Legislature for its efforts to correct a policy decision made during the recent pandemic. Allowing out-of-state online notaries to provide notarial services within the state of

Maine, while well-intentioned at the time, has raised valid concerns about the increased potential for abuse and fraud. This amendment strikes a balance by recognizing the importance of modernizing notarial practices while also upholding the principles of security, reliability, and local accountability.

In conclusion, we urge you to support this very prudent amendment to Section 9 of 33 MRSA §203. By doing so, it will strengthen protections against deed fraud, uphold the integrity of the notarial system, and ensure that the interests of Maine residents remain a top priority.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and please don't hesitate to contact me directly at matt@calnotaries.org if you require any other information.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Miller", followed by a horizontal line.

Matt Miller, President
The California League of
Independent Notaries

cc: Senator Ingwersen
Maine Secretary of State Shenna Bellows