



19 Community Drive • Augusta, Maine 04330 • (207) 622-7501 • Fax: (207) 623-3590

**Testimony in Opposition to LD 358
("An Act to Increase Fees Paid to Registers of Deeds")**

J. Andrew Cashman on behalf of the Maine Association of REALTORS®

February 24, 2025

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury and members of the Joint Select Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Andy Cashman. I am the Founder of Resolve Government Relations. We represent the Maine Association of REALTORS®, a professional trade association established in 1936 with over 6,500 members statewide. REALTORS® protect private property rights, build Maine communities, and grow our state's economy. Our members represent buyers and sellers involved in both residential and commercial real estate transactions. Our membership also includes industry affiliates, such as lenders, closing agents, title agents, appraisers, building inspectors, surveyors, etc. The Maine Association is chartered by the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR), the largest trade association in the country.

The Maine Association of REALTORS® opposes LD 358 because it would increase the cost of real estate transactions. While we do not dispute that reasonable fee increases may be necessary due to rising labor and operational costs, the fee increases proposed in this bill seem excessive and unrelated to actual costs incurred by the registries of deeds. For example, the proposed flat recording fee in Section 1 is more than double the current minimum and the proposed increase for downloads in Section 5 is ten times the current rate. Furthermore, we oppose Section 6 because it drastically reduces the number of free electronic images or abstracts from 500 to 100. Our members work closely with registries of deeds and are respectful and supportive of the essential services they provide. However, when an electronic record is accessed through the registry of deeds digital database, this incurs no labor nor real expense. Section 6 of the proposed bill appears to focus more on generating surplus revenue relative to expenses – at the cost to the parties in a real estate transaction.

We do not support the proposed fee increases during a time when home sales prices are at a historic high. These fee increases will ultimately be passed along to parties involved in the transaction. This will only contribute to additional burdens of entry into property ownership and negatively impact the overall goal of improving housing affordability in Maine. We urge this committee to look carefully at determining reasonable fees to compensate registries of deeds for their operational expenses only – and increases beyond that are unnecessary and will add to the overall cost of real estate transactions. For these reasons, we oppose LD 358 and respectfully urge you to vote Ought Not to Pass. Thank you for your time and consideration.



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