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Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association (MMA) In Opposition to

LD 358, *An Act to Increase Fees Paid to Registers of Deeds*

February 24, 2025

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Amanda Campbell, and I am submitting testimony on behalf of the Maine Municipal Association's 70-member Legislative Policy Committee (LPC) in opposition to LD 358.

This session, the LPC proactively established a platform of bills intended to bolster and support the property taxpayers of Maine. Through initiatives across the legislative board, they are committed to protecting the interests of their residents and to reducing the burden of property taxes.

LD 358 seeks to increase the fees for certain services provided by a county registrar of deeds. This proposed shift in cost burden is in direct conflict with the LPC's position.

Municipal tax collectors and treasurers currently pay \$19 to record a tax lien and the filing fee is added to the total amount of property tax due by that taxpayer. Additional pages, at a rate of \$2 per page, are seldom necessary for lien paperwork. The proposed flat rate of \$45 per recording is an increase in upfront costs to the municipality of 158%. This increase results in an additional tax burden for an already delinquent taxpayer and a shift in burden to the other taxpayers in the community who are paying for those up front filing costs. In addition, this increase could potentially cause cash flow problems for municipalities that are already juggling tight resources.

For communities that are accessing digital deed records for property tax purposes, the online county platforms are essential. Any increase in fees to access legal documents necessary for completing the tasks of property assessment directly impact the taxpayers and the LPC requests that municipalities be exempt from those increases.

Municipal officials agree that the costs of doing business are increasing, at both the municipal and county level. However, instituting statutory service fee increases as an answer to increased costs, without input from those who require those services to complete statutorily directed assessing work, is not the answer.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you and share the municipal perspective on this important topic. Please feel free to contact me or any member of the MMA Advocacy team with any questions related to municipal operations.