

Testimony in Opposition of
LD 1144: An Act to Reinstate the Property Tax Stabilization Program
April 2, 2025

Chairpersons Senator Grohoski and Representative Cloutier and honorable members of the Taxation Committee:

My name is Kerry Leichtman. I am a Certified Maine Assessor serving the jurisdictions of Camden and Rockport and am testifying today in opposition to LD 1144.

We couldn't afford the Property Tax Stabilization For Senior Citizens program during the covid years when we were flush with federal cash and the fresh, new revenues that came to Maine with escapees from the big cities and crowded suburbs to our south. And now that money is tight how is it that we're at it again?

This version of what was formerly known as LD 290 is slightly different. It exempts the first \$900,000 in value whether the property owner needs relief or not. LD 1144 does not limit the program to any income level and it still requires a 10-year Maine residency, consecutive or non-consecutive. It limits the benefit to only one homestead per applicant. I'm not sure why that's in the bill; no one is eligible to have more than one homestead anyway. A permanent resident of Maine can own many properties but can only have one homestead.

And finally, LD 1144 says a municipality may recover from the State the cost to administer the program. We were compensated last time, an amount that was nowhere near the program's actual administrative expense. LD 1144 doesn't specify the level of compensation this time around.

I think the most disappointing aspect of LD 1144 is that it might give seniors and the elderly the false hope again that this bill will swoop in and save them from rising property taxes. But it won't because we can't afford it. These people should be treated with respect, not like political footballs. Their need for meaningful property tax relief deserves your serious consideration and attention.

Other states do have property tax freezes in place for seniors and the elderly. But other states have millions of people which makes it possible to shift the burden from one group to others without causing hardship on the group(s) it got shifted to. We have to be real. We have fewer than 1.5 million people. Our state's population is the oldest in the nation. It is unrealistic to think our younger population can afford this.

Thank you for considering my testimony.