

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 Donald Ferrara. I am a Certified Maine Assessor serving the jurisdiction of Eliot and am testifying today in opposition to LD 1144.

While the intent to support our senior population is commendable, I believe there are significant issues with this proposal that warrant reconsideration. First, we must learn from past attempts to implement similar programs, such the quickly repealed LD290. Which was found to be administratively complex and costly by nature. I believe the burden of processing annual applications, verifying eligibility, and continuously updating budgets to accommodate this program outweighed the financial relief it offered.

Additionally, Maine is home to the oldest population in the nation, and while we must be mindful of the needs of our seniors, targeting property tax relief solely to those over 65 would place an unfair burden on the younger taxpayers who make up a smaller proportion of our population. This could lead to significant disparities in how tax burdens are distributed across generations, exacerbating the already existing financial strain for younger families and communities. I fear an act of this nature would only serve to push our younger homeowners away.

The implementation of LD290, although well intended, only led to frustration and confusion among many of our senior residents. The complexity of the program, with its annual application process and strict eligibility requirements, created additional stress and barriers for seniors who were already struggling to navigate bureaucratic systems. Looking ahead, it's important to consider the possibility that a senior enrolled in this program for years could simply forget to apply for a single year. The sudden removal of tax relief for just one year would be financially devastating, especially for seniors on fixed incomes who would come to rely on this assistance. The risk of these unintended consequences should not be overlooked when considering any new legislation.

I urge the Legislature to carefully consider these concerns before advancing LD1144. A solution that is both fair and financially sustainable is essential for ensuring Maine remains a great place for both its senior and younger residents alike.

Thank you for your time and consideration.