

Mary Ellen Bell
Bath, Maine
April 2, 2025

Senator Grohoski, Representative Cloutier, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Taxation, thank you for the opportunity to address the committee today. My name is Mary Ellen Bell and I am a long time resident of Bath and an outgoing City Council Chair. Good morning. I am here today in support of LD 1206.

I would like to compliment and provide context to my esteemed City of Bath colleague's testimony, and to make some general points about why the current BETE law no longer serves us, and why the city of Bath serves as a good example of why this is the case.

As you know, we are currently, nationwide, facing an uphill battle with housing. Maine has the oldest housing stock in the country, and Bath has some of the oldest housing stock in the state. This means Bath home owners spend a lot on home maintenance and repairs annually. I certainly do in my 100 year old house.

Bath's coastal geographic location 35 minutes north of Portland means that the market value of our homes has risen substantially in the past 5 years. This has been reflected in our tax valuations and assessments and consequently in our resident's tax bills. This was certainly the case for my 2024 tax bill.

Our Kennebec River side location, shared with the fourth largest employer in Maine, means our homes are densely packed, especially on the southside of Route 1 in the R1 high density district where I live. We are starting to experience a higher rate of flooding and water damage from increasingly heavy rain events which means maintenance and mitigation is needed. These needs fall on the shoulders of both residents and the city. Three years ago I collaborated with neighbors to install expensive piping down our common driveway to handle the higher volume of water runoff we now experience.

When you look at the larger picture, my point is this. Homeowners have their hands full! BETE in its current form has created a situation where residents are absorbing the burden of the exemptions. The BETE program at a minimum needs tweaking so that the tax burden is more equally shared. This is exactly what LD 1206 "An Act to Control Property Taxes By INcreasing the Percentage of the Business Equipment Tax Exemption That Municipalities May Recover." I urge you to vote "Ought to Pass".

Thank you for listening, and thank you for your service.

Sincerely, Mary Ellen Bell