

Testimony of Jake Lachance - Government Relations Specialist

Maine State Chamber of Commerce

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development

In Opposition to LD 1159, "An Act to Prohibit Businesses from Refusing to Accept Cash for In-person Payments"

Sen. Curry, Rep. Gere, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development, my name is Jake Lachance, and I am a Government Relations Specialist for the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, which advocates for a network of over 5,000 large and small businesses across the State of Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in *opposition* to LD 1159, "An Act to Prohibit Businesses from Refusing to Accept Cash for In-person Payments."

We strongly believe in supporting consumer access and economic participation. However, this bill poses serious practical and operational concerns for a wide range of businesses in Maine, especially those in the hospitality and tourism industries. The bill would limit the freedom of businesses to choose the payment methods that best align with their unique models, especially those operating in temporary or mobile environments.

Food trucks, retail kiosks, fairs, festivals, outdoor equipment rentals, and tour operators often operate without the security and infrastructure of a permanent storefront. These businesses have told us that handling and storing large sums of cash not only creates a significant safety risk but also imposes a logistical burden that could compromise both employee well-being and financial integrity. Expecting staff to transport and manage cash in such settings is not only impractical, but also unsafe.

Likewise, lodging establishments have long required electronic payments. These serve not only as booking guarantees but also provide essential protection against last-minute cancellations, refusal to vacate, or damages and incidental costs. Especially in a tourism-driven state like Maine—where visitors frequently make same-day, in-person bookings—requiring cash acceptance would create costly vulnerabilities for innkeepers, particularly small and family-run establishments.

While the intentions behind LD 1159 are understandable, the mandate removes an essential element of business autonomy. We echo the concerns shared by the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development during similar discussions on LD 621 in the 131st Legislature. As with LD 621, LD 1159 presents a one-size-fits-all solution that fails to account for the operational diversity of Maine's businesses.

This bill has been introduced in several previous sessions and has not passed. That history reflects ongoing and widespread concerns about the administrative, cost, and safety burdens associated with compulsory cash acceptance. We believe the market is best served when businesses are allowed to adapt their payment systems to suit their operations and customers. Thank you for your consideration and I am happy to answer any questions.