



Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development.

I am Matthew Boucher, the Register of Deeds for Kennebec County, and I am submitting testimony in opposition to LD 2124, "An Act to Support Emergency Shelter Funding Using Revenue from the Real Estate Transfer Tax."

The real estate transfer tax is the most significant non-property-tax revenue source for county governments like Kennebec County. It is transferred to the County Treasurer and used in the county general fund. This revenue directly offsets the tax commitment for municipalities. Any impact on this funding source will cause the county to increase its portion of the property tax, thereby increasing the overall property tax burden on residents.

If this money is redirected by the state and earmarked for emergency shelter funding, it will have the unfortunate effect of contributing to increased housing costs for average Mainers living on low or fixed incomes during a time when everything is becoming increasingly expensive. People quite literally cannot afford their bills. You hear heartbreaking stories about elderly residents having to borrow money to pay their property tax bills and avoid tax liens being filed by municipalities at the Registry of Deeds.

I do not doubt the good intent of this legislation to increase funding for emergency shelters, only the source of that money.

Maine is in the middle of an affordability crisis when it comes to housing. That affordability crisis is one of the direct causes of the need for more emergency shelter funding. It is important to remember that it is not just the cost of the house itself, but also the taxes, electricity, and fuel costs that are straining average Mainers' budgets.

Registries across the state work tirelessly to process transfer tax transactions, investing many staff hours and remaining diligent about controlling costs so that more of this funding can be directed to the counties' general fund to help offset the municipal property tax burden.

I urge this committee to protect county governments and help keep not increase property taxes by voting "**ought not to pass as written**".

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew Boucher – Register of Deeds Kennebec

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Augusta
LD 2124

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