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Chairs Curry and Gere and Members of the Committee On Housing and Economic Development:

NELTA is a trade association representing title and settlement agents, abstracters, title searchers, real estate attorneys and title underwriters in Maine, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont. NELTA is in favor of enacting measures to curb deed fraud in Maine. NELTA wishes to express our support for LD 2182 with reservations based upon our concerns.

Deed fraud is a problem across the country and NELTA applauds the Maine Legislature for addressing this issue. Settlement agents already collect photo identifications to verify both the buyers and the sellers in real estate transactions and many use identity verification software to aid in spotting falsified documents. Therefore, NELTA feels strongly that it is not necessary to require further rules on the collection of photo identifications and would prefer requirements for settlement agents be stated clearly in LD 2182 should they become part of the statute.

Additionally, as we discuss this issue with other states, many have implemented an hour of relator continuing education (of the hours they are already required) to encompass fraud prevention. Many of our members already present education to realtors across the state and many of these presentations cover the types of fraud they may encounter. This would be an additional tool to help curb deed fraud.

We urge the Committee On Housing and Economic Development to pass LD 2182 with the modifications outlined above.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment and thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Mark Bennett
Executive Director
New England Land Title Association