



Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Taxation
LD 1544: An Act To Improve Economic Security for Maine Children by Establishing the Maine Dependent Tax Credit

May 4, 2023

Senator Grohoski, Representative Perry and Members of the Committee:

I am Rev. Jane Field, a resident of Portland, an ordained Presbyterian pastor, and the Executive Director of the Maine Council of Churches, an ecumenical coalition of seven member-denominations (Episcopal, Lutheran (ELCA), Presbyterian (PCUSA), Quaker, Unitarian Universalist, United Methodist and United Church of Christ) who have 437 local congregations across this state with 55,000 members in their care. I am here to testify on the Council's behalf **in support of LD 1544.**

I would imagine it's unusual for a *clergy person* to appear before your committee, but I am here because the Maine Child Tax Credit bill addresses a moral issue – how we as a state can better support families living in poverty. Both the Hebrew and the Christian Scriptures remind us that one of the roles and responsibilities of government is to provide for the common good — to care for the most vulnerable and marginalized of our society.

We at the Maine Council of Churches (whose work is rooted in those scriptures) have a “Moral Agenda” that guides our advocacy and programmatic work. One plank in that platform is the “elimination of hunger and poverty, and enactment of policies benefiting the most vulnerable.” Because of this commitment, we call our legislators to join us in holding fast to the vision of a society that ensures that every child has equal access to the basics like food, shelter, clothing and heat. The Child Tax Credit has been proven to be one of the most effective ways to put needed money into the hands of Maine families, lift children from poverty, increase employment of parents and boost local economies. But most importantly, this bill can move 3,500 Maine kids out of poverty.

Another plank in our Moral Agenda platform is supporting “tax and budget policies that reduce disparities between rich and poor...” The Maine Child Tax Credit would help make our tax code fairer to the families and individuals who don't benefit as much as the wealthiest do from state and federal income tax advantages.

For all these reasons, LD 1544 is the right thing to do. It's the *moral* thing to do. And we at the Maine Council of Churches urge you to vote “ought to pass” on LD 1544.