

March 30, 2023, Re: Testimony in Support of LD 1101, An Act to Reduce energy costs by enacting a Home Energy Scoring System

Dear Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology,

My name is Katrina Belle and I live in Bethel ME. I am writing to you today as a contractor who is deeply passionate about improving the built environment. Today I urge you to vote “ought to pass” on LD 1101.

I have worked in construction for 8 years and have spent a considerable amount of time investigating how Maine can improve its new and existing housing stock. Currently, I build new energy efficient homes and retrofit existing homes in the Western Maine Region. I am highly aware of the cost of retrofitting existing buildings, and simultaneously aware that we absolutely must find scalable solutions to improve our current housing stock. This is a difficult challenge, but it is not insurmountable.

There are excellent examples of state incentive programs for weatherization efforts combined with electrification (Mass Saves is one of them). The key is finding the sweet spot in how much you do to the building. I know how to do this, but am lacking the state backed programs that would push the needle into making a scalable retrofit/electrifying effort a reality. Maine has certainly made progress but is still far behind. If we are to reach our climate goals we *must* find effective solutions to not only incentivize homeowners and builders, but influence real estate market forces. LD1101 is a critical component to making both efforts work.

LD 1101 makes a strong, scalable step towards addressing the dire need for incorporating efficiency prioritization into building assessments. Voluntary audits would provide homeowners with an incentive to improve their building or build a new house more efficiently from the start. It has been well proven that building better pays for itself in as few as 7-10 years. What we need is widespread awareness of the ‘business case’ for building efficiency. LD 1101 publicly addresses the economic value of building efficiently. It would also increase awareness of rebates, incentives, and tax credits, and begin to develop a roadmap to improve Maine’s building stock at scale, a critical resource for our climate action plan.

I have thought about and researched this issue for years. I would be more than happy to discuss the matter in further depth or provide more resources to support the above statements. Please consider LD1101 as the influential and critical step we need to tackle the essential need to improve Maine’s existing and future housing stock.

Respectfully submitted,

Katrina Belle, Project Manager & Assistant General Manager of Maine Passive House.