



Committee on Housing
% Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

May 8, 2023

RE: LD 1673, An Act to Encourage Affordable Housing and Mixed-use Development by Establishing a Thriving Corridors Program

Dear Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of LD 1673, “An Act to Encourage Affordable Housing and Mixed-use Development by Establishing a Thriving Corridors Program”, on behalf of Maine Audubon and our 30,000 members, supporters, and volunteers. Since 1843, Maine Audubon has worked to conserve Maine’s wildlife and wildlife habitat by engaging people in education, conservation, and action. The oldest and largest Maine-based conservation organization, Maine Audubon has eight public centers and sanctuaries across the state, seven chapters, and connects with more than 250,000 people annually.

Maine Audubon recognizes the incredible importance of land use law for creating thriving communities and for conserving valuable habitats and natural resources. By encouraging the identification and development of high-impact corridors near municipal downtowns or village centers, Maine’s communities can concentrate development closest to existing, high-use development (including downtowns and village centers), rather than increasing sprawl and in turn, habitat fragmentation. By allowing higher densities/smaller lots in these corridors and creating a thriving mixed use downtown or village center, a community can increase the desirability of living and working close together, while protecting farming, forestry, important natural resources, and recreation in surrounding rural areas. This approach – again – removes development pressure from existing undeveloped areas, as well as reduces time, greenhouse gas emissions, and dollars spent traveling.

Maine Audubon also recognizes the value to the community and to local wildlife populations of offsetting higher human use in one area of town with protection of open space and/or rural lands and industries in other areas of town. When higher densities are allowed within the heart of a community, undeveloped conserved lands can provide an invaluable resource for the community and an opportunity for the municipality to support a balance between developed

and undeveloped lands. Therefore, we recommend removing Section 4494(2)(G), thereby allowing a community to include a reasonable open space requirement if they so desire.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eliza Donoghue". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "E".

Eliza Donoghue, Esq.
Director of Advocacy