



SIERRA CLUB

MAINE CHAPTER

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To: Joint Committee on Housing and Economic Development
From: Nathan Davis, Ph.D., Sierra Club Maine
Date: March 12, 2025
Re: **Testimony in Support of L.D. 997: An Act to Allow Residential Use Development in Commercial Districts**

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and members of the Joint Committee on Housing and Economic Development, my name is Nathan Davis, and I write on behalf of Sierra Club Maine, representing over 22,000 supporters and members statewide. Founded in 1892, Sierra Club is one of our nation's oldest and largest environmental organizations. We work diligently to amplify the power of our 3.8 million members nationwide as we work towards combating climate change and promoting a just and sustainable economy. To that end, we urge you to vote "ought to pass" on L.D. 997: An Act to Allow Residential Use Development in Commercial Districts.

We generally support mixed-use development as a path towards addressing Maine's housing crisis and creating more sustainable, affordable, integrated, and livable communities, and this bill is a step down that path. It aligns with recent efforts at both the state and municipal levels to reform our land use laws to better serve the people of Maine into the future.

We do have some concerns around what "commercial use" might encompass. Municipalities can have legitimate interests in, for example, encouraging the clustering of heavy industrial uses or preserving limited waterfront space for marine uses, and we suggest that the Committee and sponsors consider the degree to which this bill might encroach on such interests. We hope that you will confirm in any committee report or other legislative history that the use of the word "solely" in the bill does allow municipalities to prohibit a residential use on a lot zoned for commercial use for other reasons set out in the ordinance or other record, such as we note here or to otherwise protect the health, safety and economic welfare of the jurisdiction. In any case, that is the clear meaning of that word in its context and we appreciate that careful drafting.

Having addressed these concerns, we support the overall effect and intent of this legislation. We urge you to vote "ought to pass".

Sincerely,
Nathan Davis, Ph.D.
Sierra Club Maine
Legislative Team member