

*Joint Standing Committee on Housing & Economic Development
Testimony of Sherrin Vail, Evernorth*

in favor of LD970 - An Act to Prioritize Affordable Housing by Expediting Reviews for Affordable Housing Projects Applying for Funding from the Maine State Housing Authority Sponsored by Rep. Malon

Hello, Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development.

My name is Sherrin Vail. I am the Vice President of Asset Management & Portfolio Initiatives for Evernorth. **Evernorth** is a nonprofit organization serving the low and moderate income people of Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont with affordable housing and community investments.

As you know, Maine is under extreme pressure to provide housing that is safe and affordable for all Maine people. More housing is the solution to many of Maine's challenges. In recent years, unprecedented investments in building affordable housing have been made. Yet these projects get caught up in multiple years of approval processes at the municipal and state level. These delays increase costs, water down the investment the state is making and leaves more Maine people without access to housing.

We support LD970 to streamline Maine's permitting of state funded affordable housing that is currently adding unnecessary red tape, time and cost to building affordable housing in Maine. The State commissioned a housing study with HR&A in 2023 that stated that Maine needs 80,000 new homes by 2030. This year, HR&A shared a roadmap to meeting that goal. Streamlining processes was HR&A's number one priority and within that.

LD970 provides simple, consistent, transparent accountability for all stakeholders involved in meeting Maine's housing goals. Maine's investments in building multifamily affordable housing should be put to use in the most efficient route possible, currently time, money and resources are being wasted.

Thank you for your consideration in support of LD970. We see this as a pathway to more streamlined, efficient use of state resources in the development of affordable housing in Maine so all Maine people have a home.

