

MAINE SERVICE CENTERS COALITION

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Testimony of the Maine Service Centers Coalition

LD 970, An Act to Prioritize Affordable Housing by Expediting Reviews for Affordable Housing Projects Applying for Funding from the Maine State Housing Authority

Senator Curry, Representative Gere and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development, the Maine Service Centers Coalition is submitting testimony in opposition to LD 970, An Act to Prioritize Affordable Housing by Expediting Reviews for Affordable Housing Projects Applying for Funding from the Maine State Housing Authority.

The Maine Service Centers Coalition, comprised of 26 towns and cities across the state, articulates the importance of healthy and thriving service center communities, advocates for public policy that supports and contributes to the economic and social viability of our communities, and collaborates with municipal officials, legislators, state agencies and nonprofits to pursue quality of life for all who live and work in our state.

LD 970 would place deadlines for municipalities to make decisions on permit applications for affordable housing developments seeking funds or credits from the Maine State Housing Authority. As service center communities, we certainly understand the need for additional affordable housing. However, it is critically important for us to take the time necessary to ensure every proposed project meets established health, safety and quality standards prior to issuing approval.

Municipal permit application reviews include assessing the impacts of proposed projects on emergency services, water and sewer systems, schools and public facilities, roads and traffic, and the environment. The reviews also determine whether proposals are consistent with our comprehensive plans.

During the course of reviewing permit applications, delays could occur for any number of reasons: Assessments could be complex; responses to information requests could be delayed; zoning changes could be required; or staff could be overextended. Our municipalities would prefer to have the option of working with affordable housing developers to resolve issues rather than rendering decisions within mandated timeframes.

We respectfully ask you to vote ought not to pass on LD 970.

Thank you for your time and attention.