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April 10, 2025

Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs  
132nd Maine Legislature  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Honorable Members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

Maine Preservation is a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and preserving historic places, buildings, downtowns, and neighborhoods—strengthening the cultural and economic vitality of Maine communities.

I write to express strong support for L.D. 1282 “An Act Regarding Eligibility for Historic Preservation Bond Proceeds.” The rehabilitation of historic community buildings is central to maintaining a sense of place and critical to the cultural, economic, and civic health of Maine communities.

Maine Preservation provides technical assistance and grant guidance to nonprofits and local governments that steward historic buildings, giving us firsthand knowledge of the significant need for capital improvement funds for rehabilitation projects, enhancing accessibility, and improving energy efficiency and climate resilience. For the past six years we have administered small capital improvement grants totaling \$750,000 to non-profit organizations with a maximum individual award of \$10,000. During that same time, we received letters of interest from more than 150 groups, stretching from Wells to Madawaska, with requests to support capital improvements nearing \$2 million. Roughly one third of applicants are not listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

While we wholeheartedly support the expansion of eligibility for this new financial resource for non-profits and local governments, the bill does not define what a “historic property” or “historic preservation ordinance” is. We propose that the two terms follow the criteria in the definition for “certified historic home” outlined in [LD 435](#) (An Act to Expand the Historic Property Rehabilitation Tax Credit):

- A building individually listed in or determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places;
- Classified as contributing to a historic district listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places;
- Designated as a local landmark or a contributing resource in a local historic district that has been certified by the United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service; or



- Designated as a local landmark or contributing to a local historic district that substantially meets the National Register of Historic Places criteria as determined by the director.

It is not just good drafting to have the definitions align in these two bills, it is a matter of maximum efficiency and benefit to local communities. For example, a municipality may create a historic district under the guidance above, where a historic community building and dozens of historic homes are included within the same boundaries. The community building would be eligible for this grant program and the historic homes would be eligible for the expanded Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit. If aligned, LD 1282 and LD 435 would put power in the hands of local governments to determine not only what is historically significant, but to invest in those shared assets.

Maine Preservation supports passage of LD 1282 incorporating the recommendations above. With respect, this Committee might take a step further and permit government resources to be a match for this grant program. It is already difficult enough to find funding for these projects.

We are available to answer questions and participate in the working session. Please let us know if there is any additional information that we can provide.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tara Kelly". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

Tara Kelly  
Executive Director