Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

In Opposition to

LD 1569 – *Resolve, to Direct the Department of Economic and Community Development to Form a Stakeholder Group to Analyze and Improve Home Repair Funding Programs in the State*

April 25, 2025

Sen. Curry, Rep. Gere and distinguished members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee, my name is Rebecca Graham, and I am submitting testimony in opposition to LD 1569, at the direction of MMA's Legislative Policy Committee (LPC). Our LPC is composed of municipal officials from across Maine, elected by their peers to represent communities with vastly different enforcement staff, resources and capacities.

While officials appreciate the sponsor's inclusion of municipal representation on the committee, the reason for LPC opposition is two-fold. The first is that the committee organization lead by the Department of Economic and Community Development is better suited to the Maine Office of Community Affairs as the outcomes should produce a central information pot for communities and their residents to find all available programs and be connected to other planning and granting resources expected to be housed there. The second is that most of the home repair programs and their deficiencies are well known and regionalized through Home Repair Network (HRN) and other regional philanthropic supported programs are shared through senior and community action programs, and municipalities.

The biggest issues facing these programs are a lack of volunteer support, and funding that has less impact in the current construction economy. Federal programs have rules that offer thresholds of cost that are out sync with aging housing stock need. For these reasons, officials share that a better use of administrative funds necessary for the study would be a direct allocation to help fill the gaps in the HRN Program.

For these reasons, officials ask you to carefully consider how best to support home repair programs through direct allocation rather than additional tasks.