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Testimony in Opposition of LD 1534 (“An Act Enabling Municipalities to Protect Tenants and Stabilize Rents”)

**J. Andrew Cashman on behalf of the Maine Association of REALTORS®
April 25, 2025**

Senator Curry, Representative Gere and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development my name is Andy Cashman. I am the Founder of Resolve Government Relations. We represent the Maine Association of REALTORS®, a professional trade association established in 1936 with over 6,500 members statewide. REALTORS® protect private property rights, build Maine communities, and grow our state’s economy. Our members represent buyers and sellers involved in both residential and commercial real estate transactions. Our membership also includes industry affiliates, such as lenders, closing agents, title agents, appraisers, building inspectors, surveyors, etc. The Maine Association is chartered by the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR), the largest trade association in the country.

The Maine Association of REALTORS® strongly opposes LD 1534. The bill would limit a housing provider’s ability to manage their own property, and it would place additional regulations on the private sector’s ability to provide rental housing in our state. The bill would also limit the landlord’s ability to terminate a tenancy through eviction or non-renewal by allowing a municipality to specify the only reasons (“just cause”) under which a landlord may do so regardless of whether the arrangement is subject to a lease agreement or is a tenancy-at-will.

Property owners have various reasons why they may need to have the tenants vacate. Private property rights are paramount. In tenancy-at-will situations, neither the property owner nor the tenant has committed to the other for the long term. This provides both with flexibility and both parties understand that the agreement can end at any time. Current law provides sufficient protection and an appropriate balance for both parties that should not be expanded upon.

Property owners who lease their units are operating Maine businesses. They provide housing and tenants pay a monthly rent that covers the cost of providing this housing. This bill would place additional burdens on property owners who have chosen to provide rental housing. By modifying the current eviction statute, it may make the market unfavorable for property owners to want to enter the rental market or continue renting their property altogether. Another concern is the public safety of other tenants. If a housing provider does not have the legal right to remove difficult tenants, this could



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impact other tenants and create an unsafe environment - putting respectful tenants at risk and creating potentially costly and lengthy legal situations.

Rental housing needs are best met through private investment, and limiting the use of property through regulation restricts private property rights and will have a negative impact on Maine's limited housing supply should property owners choose to use their properties in other ways.

With respect to the rent control provisions in the bill, we understand that this bill does not mandate rent control but rather provides an enforcement mechanism, through the state's unfair trade practices act. MAR opposes rent control and feels that statewide rental provisions are an unnecessary burden to our state's housing providers, especially at a time of historically low inventory. The impacts of rent control policy are seen across the country, to include some Maine cities. It disincentivizes mobility in the market, causing tenants to remain in place, which limits rental housing availability. This poses challenges for younger families and our workforce to find a place to live. Rent stabilization policy will also have a negative impact on property tax revenue and disproportionately shifts the tax burden to single-family homeowners, driving up the cost of housing and making ownership more challenging. Rent control is a barrier to the natural ebb and flow of the housing market and to the economy overall.

MAR supports initiatives that serve to increase the availability and affordability of housing through the private sector, not deter housing providers, restrict rights and cause additional undue harm to housing in our state. For these reasons, we respectfully urge you to vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 1534. Thank you for your time and consideration.