

May 8, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,



This letter urges the strongest possible support of LD 1755 to increase Maine's historic tax credits for smaller rural communities throughout the state and for projects that are at least one-third for housing. The Tides Institute & Museum of Art (TIMA) was founded 23 years ago in 2002 in the tiny City of Eastport, Maine, a community that has lost 80 percent of its population over the last century. Neighboring communities like Calais and Lubec have lost 50 percent of their population over the same time period. Much of the architectural heritage that shapes the historic character of these communities was built when the population of these communities were at their height. It is exceedingly difficult to maintain and repurpose this architectural heritage when the current population of these communities is half, two-thirds or less from when the historic buildings of these communities were built.

Over the past 23 years, TIMA has taken on eight vacant historic buildings in Eastport that otherwise would have been torn down. These include three downtown commercial buildings in the center of Eastport's 30 building National Register Historic District that were each on the verge of outright collapse. These also include two remarkable vacant early 19th century church buildings and a vacant Civil War veterans hall that contains Maine's only Civil War mural. These are all buildings that private commercial entities could not begin to touch due to the exceedingly high cost of restoring these buildings and the difficulty of converting these building to other uses such as housing. Having a significant increase in the state's historic tax credits for smaller rural communities will allow far more threatened historic buildings in rural Maine to be saved, restored, repurposed and maintained for other uses including in particular housing. These will become important pieces in revitalizing rural communities.

Maine is known for its authenticity. Preserving the historic and architectural character of Maine's rural communities goes a long way in support of this authenticity. So, too, does providing decent affordable housing to attract and keep people in these rural communities. Places like Eastport, Calais, Lubec and other rural communities in Maine need all the help they can get to keep these communities the special authentic places that they are while adapting them to be sustainable and prosperous in the twentieth-first century. LD 1755 will allow far more smaller threatened historic buildings in rural Maine to become viable redevelopment projects while preserving the historic character of these buildings and providing critical housing for these rural communities.

LD 1755 is an crucial step in the right direction to revitalize Maine's rural communities and keep Maine being Maine. I urge the passage of LD 1755 in the strongest possible terms.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be "H. French", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Hugh French
Director

Muselenk (Moose Island)

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