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Testimony in Opposition to LD 1929 (“An Act to Improve Public Utility Service by Addressing Seasonal Property Hazards”)

**J. Andrew Cashman on behalf of the Maine Association of REALTORS®
May 9, 2025**

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, 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® opposes LD 1929. This bill would mandate owners of seasonal residential dwellings to at least annually inspect the property to identify and address potential hazards to utility service and operation posed by hazards on the property. Additionally, the bill would require the same property owner to hire a caretaker and connect them with the utility prior to any issues arising.

Additional requirements to property owners add to the cost of housing over time. The assumption of this bill would be that all owners of seasonal properties are in a financial position to hire a caretaker. It is quite possible that property maintenance has been deferred due to a lack of funds or resources. One of the fundamental rights of private property is the choice of how you care for your property. Ownership can look differently from one owner to the next, and for any number of reasons beyond the scope of the legislature. The requirement of additional expenses on use and ownership adds to the cost of housing and acts as a roadblock to one of the highest personal priorities of most Americans.

LD 1929 does not propose how the bill’s mandates would be paid for but ultimately, every dollar spent on these mandates is another dollar not spent on increasing the supply of much-needed housing. Furthermore, the mandates are redundant for most utilities who already have the legal authority to conduct inspections along utility lines and the ability to remediate problems and the information as to who the property owners are should they need to contact them. This would result in duplicative efforts and wasted resources. It would also pose challenges to enforcement in municipalities who already are constrained in resources and staffing. LD 1929 would hurt Maine communities and create more disruption than benefit to housing.

MAR continually advocates for adoption and integration of housing policies that respond to the individual and collective housing needs of our society. LD 1929 would create additional barriers that impact housing availability and affordability. It targets existing owners of property and adds to the cost of keeping their property. 75% of seasonal properties in Maine communities are owned and used by Maine citizens and families. These families are working and contributing to our state’s economy and choosing



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to recreate and keep their dollars in our state. They should not be expected to pay additional fees for owning and using their property how they choose.

LD 1929 would disincentivize ownership and create a deeper divide amongst our communities. Instead of proposals that challenge and overregulate private property rights, we encourage support for measures that serve to provide tangible solutions to our state's housing needs. These include measures that encourage the development of housing of all types and continued tax incentives that serve to make housing more attainable and affordable for Mainers.

The Maine Association of REALTORS® is committed to the protection and preservation of private property rights and the ability for property owners to use their property how they choose free from burdensome regulations that make ownership that much harder to maintain and achieve. For these reasons, we strongly urge you to vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 1929. Thank you for your time and consideration.