

Testimony of Collin van der Veen, Principal at Gurnet Real Estate Group

In Support of LD 1829 – An Act to Build Housing for Maine Families and Attract Workers to Maine Businesses

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development,

My name is Collin van der Veen, and I'm the Principal of Gurnet Real Estate Group, a workforce and affordable housing operator focused on acquiring, developing, and managing multifamily communities across Maine. I'm writing in strong support of LD 1829.

Even in communities that consider themselves pro-housing, it is incredibly difficult to get projects approved. I've seen this firsthand—projects that are 100% affordable and aim to serve working families still get delayed or derailed due to concerns over density, traffic, or neighborhood impact. These concerns, while not unimportant, are often enough to block desperately needed housing, even when local leaders acknowledge the scale of the housing crisis.

Establishing the Housing Development Resolution Board is a crucial step toward addressing this issue. It offers a fair and efficient venue for appeals and ensures that the state's urgent need for housing isn't consistently overruled by narrow local interests. Other states like New Hampshire and Connecticut have adopted similar structures with success.

LD 1829's provision allowing affordable housing developments to exceed local height restrictions by up to 14 feet is another practical and meaningful improvement. Greater height flexibility lets developers reduce building footprints, add green space, and better meet the concerns of planning boards—without sacrificing housing units.

LD 1829 is a smart, balanced response to Maine's worsening housing shortage. It respects local authority while creating a consistent framework that allows the state to make real progress on housing. I urge you to vote "Ought to Pass."

Thank you for your time and consideration.