



May 12, 2025

Senator Chip Curry  
Representative Traci Gere  
Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing & Economic Development  
Maine State Legislature  
c/o Legislative Information Office  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

**RE: Testimony in support of LD 1829 - An Act to Build Housing for Maine Families**

Dear Senator Curry, Representative Gere & Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing & Economic Development:

My name is Richard A. Hooks Wayman, and I am a resident of Portland, Maine. I have the honor of serving as the appointed Chair of Maine's Statewide Homeless Council. I also serve as the President & CEO for VOA Northern New England which is headquartered in Brunswick. VOA Northern New England is a faith-based, community nonprofit that works with people experiencing deep poverty, disabilities, and homelessness.

I wish to submit this testimony in support of LD 1829 and its spectrum of policy reforms focused on curbing barriers to the production of affordable housing in Maine.

The lack of affordable housing is a leading cause of homelessness in Maine. The Maine Point-in-Time (PIT) Count conducted on January 23rd, 2024 (the most recent data available) found 2,695 individuals experiencing homelessness, including 272 people sleeping outside. The Legislature is well aware of our housing crisis and the fact that our state has established a goal of producing 84,000 new units of affordable housing by 2030. While needed after decades of underproduction of homes in Maine, this goal is extremely aspirational. Our state's current pipeline of affordable housing produces only a few thousand new, affordable units annually. LD 1829 offers concrete reforms that would curtail local practices that create barriers to the production of affordable housing.

Maine should learn from our neighbors. Both New Hampshire and Connecticut have housing resolution boards which balance local review with nonprofit developer's goals for siting new projects. Without a fair and efficient appeals process, developers and community nonprofits will continue to face costly lawsuits even after meeting all local and state requirements. This bill's establishment of a fair land use review process, as already practiced in neighboring states, is needed to limit costly litigation.

Further, LD 1829 offers a spectrum of concrete reforms which create a balance between local control and creating opportunities for housing development in our towns and cities. Of note is its attempt to require a municipality to allow a certain number of dwelling units per lot (depending on whether the lot is in a designated growth area or is served by public water and sewer) and another provision which prohibits a municipality from enacting an ordinance that limits the rate of growth of residential development in a designated growth area. These provisions are narrowly tailored to address barriers for new development.

LD 1829 is a balanced policy solution to the complex challenges faced by nonprofit housing developers in Maine. This bill preserves local planning authority and creates a fair and timely appeal process to determine municipal land use decisions. It will help to expand housing opportunities and end homelessness for our neighbors.

Thank you for considering my testimony. I am grateful for your public service and leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Richard A. Hooks Wayman" with a long, sweeping horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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