

Joint Standing Committee on Housing & Economic Development

Testimony of Cynthia Lacasse, Evernorth, in favor of LD1829 - An Act to Build Housing for Maine Families and Attract Workers to Maine Businesses - Sponsored by Speaker Fecteau

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development. My name is **Cynthia Lacasse**. I am the Executive Vice President and Chief Program Officer of Evernorth, a nonprofit organization serving the low and moderate income people of Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont with affordable housing and community investments over the past 37 years. During this time, Evernorth and its predecessor organizations have invested \$1.6 billion, approximately 35% of this amount has been invested in Maine.

I am sharing strong support for LD 1829, a comprehensive and necessary measure that takes meaningful steps to address Maine's worsening housing shortage. Maine's 2025 Roadmap to Housing Production identified regulatory bottlenecks and inconsistent municipal practices are stalling the production of housing that Maine families and workers urgently need.

The combination of skyrocketing rents, low housing inventory, and home prices rising faster than incomes is leaving working families, seniors, and young adults without viable housing options. While the state made some progress in LD2003 to reduce barriers, this bill had several items removed that continue to block or delay urgently needed affordable housing. These delays are not just a nuisance—they are a major contributor to decades of underproduction of homes in Maine.

Establishing a Housing Resolution Board—is a critical policy step. Without a fair, efficient, and expert appeals process, developers and housing nonprofits will continue to face unpredictable, costly legal battles even when they meet all local and state requirements. Both New Hampshire and Connecticut show us that a housing resolution board is a proven approach for balancing local review with the urgent need for statewide housing production.

In addition, LD 1829 strengthens Maine's pro-housing framework with targeted and evidence based policies that allows for thoughtfully placed development of new homes for residents of all incomes in designated growth areas where municipal water and sewer are available:

- It requires 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;
- It requires a municipality to allow an affordable housing development to exceed any height restrictions by no more than 14 feet;
- It prohibits a municipality from enacting an ordinance that limits the rate of growth of residential development in a designated growth area;
- It prohibits a municipality from establishing or enforcing a minimum lot size requirement greater than 5,000 square feet per dwelling unit to be served by public water and public sewer

LD 1829 takes a balanced, forward-looking approach to the complex problem of housing underproduction in Maine. It does not eliminate local planning authority, it quickly elevates housing as a solution to local community issues by increasing municipal tax bases, supporting workforce, and more. I urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 1829.