



Testimony in Support of LD 1829:
An Act to Build Housing for Maine Families and Attract Workers to Maine Businesses

May 13, 2025

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development:

My name is Patrick Hess, and I serve as the Director of Real Estate Development at Avesta Housing, the largest nonprofit developer of affordable housing in northern New England. I am here today to offer our organization's strong support for LD 1829, An Act to Build Housing for Maine Families and Attract Workers to Maine Businesses. Avesta Housing has been developing safe, quality, affordable homes for over 50 years, and we see firsthand the growing challenges Mainers face due to the shortage of housing across income levels. Maine needs approximately 84,000 additional homes by 2030 to meet projected demand. LD 1829 is a timely and necessary response to this crisis.

We particularly support Section 1 of the bill, which establishes the Housing Development Resolution Board. The absence of an expert, streamlined appeals process for housing-related decisions can delay projects significantly, even when they meet all local and state requirements. These delays can jeopardize funding, increase construction costs, and ultimately result in fewer homes for Maine people. A housing resolution board, modeled after those in Connecticut and New Hampshire, would provide predictability, fairness, and efficiency in land use decision-making.

In addition to establishing this board, LD 1829 includes practical policy changes that will reduce unnecessary barriers to housing development. These include:

- Requiring municipalities to allow more units per lot in growth areas or areas served by public infrastructure;
- Limiting height restrictions on affordable housing by allowing modest increases (up to 14 feet);
- Requiring land use training for municipal planning board members to ensure consistent, informed decision-making.

These changes are not extreme—they are measured steps that reflect the urgency of our housing shortage while preserving local input and maintaining quality standards.

Avesta has experienced firsthand how the current patchwork of local land use policies can delay or derail essential housing projects leading to timelines that are unacceptable if we are serious about addressing the housing crisis. LD 1829 provides the kind of structural reform we need to align land use policy with the urgency of our housing needs. We respectfully urge the committee to support this critical legislation and vote “Ought to Pass” on LD 1829.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to addressing Maine’s housing challenges.

Sincerely,

Patrick Hess
Director of Real Estate Development, Avesta Housing
phess@avestahousing.org