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**Testimony of Representative Traci Gere Introducing LD 1672,
An Act to Establish an Affordable Housing Permitting Process
January 5, 2024**

Good morning Senator Pierce and fellow members of the Joint Select Committee on Housing. I am Representative Traci Gere, and I represent House District 134, which encompasses Kennebunkport and coastal Biddeford and Kennebunk. I am before you today to present LD 1672, which proposes an affordable housing permitting process.

During our Housing committee work, we have learned about a number of situations where housing proposals that comply with communities' established plans have been canceled after many months and even years of work. This sets communities back as they work to create housing solutions for people in need, including many who work in essential but low-paying jobs.

We have a big housing nut to crack, and the need to support the well-being of our people and the health and growth of our economy is great. I speak often of the best practice of communities coming together to understand the changing housing needs of their residents and local businesses to create a shared vision for housing development. When municipalities and regional planning organizations work together with housing developers and bring the community along as plans are created, housing that meets the communities' goals can result. But that ideal process doesn't always happen, and NIMBYism can derail solid proposals.

LD 1672 would create a process for addressing just this situation, providing a state review board staffed by experts in the field. It's important to note that the process would only apply to projects with at least 50% affordable units in Designated Growth Areas with water and sewer service when an applicable ordinance is not consistent with a municipality's Comprehensive Plan. The board would be required to consider the recommendations of the local board in rendering its decision.

It's important that we hear LD 1672 as one approach, used in other states, to both provide a path for quality housing development and motivate municipalities to align their zoning and land use policies with Comprehensive Plans that acknowledge the need for affordable housing and lay out a vision for allowing it.

Respectfully,

Traci Gere
State Representative

District 134: Biddeford (part), Kennebunk (part) and Kennebunkport