



## Testimony In Support of L.D. 2214, Part DD

MARCH 01, 2024 – Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, Senator Nangle, and Representative Stover and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Ryan Fecteau, Senior Officer of Policy and Planning at Avesta Housing. Avesta Housing is the largest non-profit developer of affordable housing in northern New England. I'm here today to offer our organization's strong support for Part DD in the proposed supplemental budget.

Part DD creates the Office of Community Affairs which is charged with providing “coordinated and efficient planning, technical assistance, and financial support to better plan for challenges, pursue solutions, and create stronger, more resilient Maine communities.” Avesta believes the creation of this Office will add much needed capacity, support, and guidance to Maine communities, particularly as it relates to municipal planning and land use regulations. Maine's towns and cities are face-to-face with the housing crunch. Whether it be addressing homelessness or filling vacant municipal jobs, communities across Maine know housing is integral to economic and social vitality. By creating the Office of Community Affairs, much needed support will allow towns and cities to be better equipped to take on the housing challenge.

Of course, as you know, towns and cities have been asking for this kind of support. That's why L.D. 2003 which passed in the 130<sup>th</sup> Legislature included a municipal grant program and technical assistance grant. Municipalities are looking for extra support and guidance to review ordinances, pursue federal funding, and plan for future growth. Part DD would introduce a long-term solution, building upon these initial L.D. 2003 grant programs.

Avesta has properties in both Maine and New Hampshire. Thus, we have the opportunity to engage local and state governments in both states. It's been eye-opening to see how a similar office in NH to the one proposed in Part DD has positively impacted housing efforts there. The office in NH has been a key entity in numerous activities including trainings for planning board members, webinars on land use regulations, and the creation of housing toolkit. You can look at the toolkit by visiting <https://nhhousingtoolbox.org/>.

For these reasons, Avesta Housing is excited to support the creation of the Office of Community Affairs as proposed in Part DD. Thank you for your consideration of our testimony. I am happy to answer any questions.

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