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LD 445 - An Act to Stimulate Housing Production by Increasing the Threshold Before Participation in the Maine Uniform and Energy Code is Mandatory

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and honorable members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee, I write in **opposition** of LD 445. This change would have significant negative consequences for the safety, economic stability, and long-term sustainability of Maine communities.

First and foremost, weakening the enforcement of MUBEC would compromise public safety. Building codes exist to ensure that structures are constructed to withstand the environmental conditions of our State, including harsh winters, high winds, and flooding risks. By raising the enforcement threshold, thousands of residents in small and mid-sized municipalities would be left without the protections provided by standardized codes, increasing the likelihood of unsafe and substandard construction. Maine should be ensuring all contractors and communities have the support they need to implement Maine's building codes.

Additionally, the economic impact of this change could be detrimental to Maine's housing market and workforce. Consistent building codes create a level playing field for contractors and developers, ensuring fair competition and reducing liability risks. Without MUBEC enforcement, inconsistencies in construction standards will emerge, leading to potential devaluation of properties in municipalities that no longer enforce the code. Furthermore, homebuyers and businesses seeking to invest in Maine may be deterred by the uncertainty of varying standards across different towns.

Lastly, raising the enforcement threshold would create long-term disparities between large and small communities. While larger municipalities would continue to benefit from standardized, safe, and efficient construction practices, smaller towns, many of which are already struggling with infrastructure challenges would be left behind. This move could exacerbate rural-urban divides and hinder efforts to create sustainable, resilient communities statewide.

For these reasons, I urge policymakers to reject any effort to weaken MUBEC enforcement by raising the population threshold. Ensuring that all Maine residents, regardless of the size of their community, have access to safe, high-quality buildings, should remain a top priority.

Shawn Esler, State Fire Marshal