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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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**Testimony of Representative Traci Gere Introducing LD 546,
Resolve, to Require the Preparation of Pre-approved Building Types
March 4, 2025**

Good morning Senator Curry and fellow members of the Committee on Housing & Economic Development. 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 546, which proposes to create a set of pre-approved building types that municipalities may adopt.

During the site visits that this committee made in the beginning of this legislative session, we had the opportunity to see a wide variety of housing types that developers and community organizations are creating to meet housing needs in their communities. At the 55 Weston project in Madison, we heard that one of the features of the project that helped it win approval was that “the buildings look like they’ve been here for 100 years.” The style of those two buildings, each made up of nine apartments using modular building techniques, corresponded to forms already present in the community in a scale that fits the neighborhood. Good architecture and design go far in lowering resistance to new residential development in communities.

Lengthy approval and permitting timelines add costs to housing development – costs that make it more difficult to finance and build the housing that we sorely need. The concept behind pre-approved building types is to provide guidance to developers that connects proposed building types with community expectations. A municipality may specify building types in advance that are pre-approved, for use in specific areas or zones or community-wide, expediting the approval process when they are proposed.

This resolve brings back a measure that passed in the 131st Legislature with bipartisan support and, indeed, this resolve has robust bipartisan sponsorship. It directs the administration to work with a consultant to establish a set of building types that municipalities may adopt as pre-approved building types in order to reduce the cost and time associated with approving and processing building permit applications. Think of it as a modern “Sears catalog” that communities wishing to adopt pre-approved building types can choose from. The building types will be designed to fit Maine towns and neighborhoods and provide affordable units for which the rent does not exceed 30% of the median income in the county where the building will be located. The process will also use input on technologies, materials, and building methods designed to make housing more efficient and affordable. The department will report back to this committee, providing an opportunity to report out a bill.



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Finally, as printed, this resolve is a directive to the Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry. Please expect to see the resolve amended to instead direct the Maine Office of Community Affairs to undertake this work. It is the appropriate department to do so, after it is created.

This resolve provides an excellent opportunity to support Maine communities in creating the housing that they need while also strengthening neighborhoods and community.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Traci Gere".

Traci Gere
State Representative