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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Testimony of Representative Holly Eaton introducing
**LD 1106: An Act to Provide Funds for the Redevelopment of the Island
Nursing Home in Hancock County into Affordable Senior Housing**
Before the Housing and Economic Development Committee

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and distinguished members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee, my name is Representative Holly Eaton, and I proudly represent House District 15, which includes the island and coastal communities of Deer Isle, Stonington, Brooklin, Tremont, Southwest Harbor, Frenchboro, Swan's Island, Isle au Haut, and Vinalhaven. I am here today as the sponsor of LD 1106, "An Act to Provide Funds for the Redevelopment of the Island Nursing Home in Hancock County into Affordable Senior Housing."

LD 1106 proposes a one-time appropriation of \$250,000 to the Maine State Housing Authority to support the redevelopment of the former Island Nursing Home, located in Deer Isle, into 24 affordable apartments for senior citizens.

When the Island Nursing Home closed, it created a ripple effect that continues to impact families across our region. We lost a critical long-term care facility — but more than that, we lost a sense of stability and safety for our aging residents. Many elders were forced to leave their island homes and the communities they helped build, and our region has struggled to recover from that loss.

Since the closure, the Board of Directors of the Island Nursing Home has remained committed to finding a path forward. I've been supportive of their efforts and am proud to bring forward this opportunity through LD 1106. The proposal to convert the facility into affordable senior housing is both thoughtful and urgently needed. In coordinating with the Maine State Housing Authority, this bill provides the initial funding necessary to move the project toward construction.

District 15: Brooklin, Deer Isle, Eagle Island Township, Frenchboro, Southwest Harbor,
Stonington, Swan's Island, Tremont, Isle au Haut, Vinalhaven

Importantly, several other legislators from surrounding areas have also supported the board's work throughout this time — a reflection of just how vital this resource was, and still is, to our broader region.

This project is shovel-ready, community-driven, and offers a smart reuse of existing infrastructure to meet a growing need. The proposed funding will help kick-start renovations, which are expected to cost between \$1.2 and \$1.5 million. These state dollars will help leverage additional private and federal investments to bring the project to completion.

LD 1106 includes accountability language requiring the Maine State Housing Authority to report on the use of funds and project progress within six months of receipt. However, based on conversations with the agency, I want to note that this timeline could be adjusted if needed to better align with departmental operations.

In addition to serving older adults, the creation of 24 new housing units will help reduce the overall housing burden felt throughout the community. By adding to our limited housing stock, this project supports both individual stability and regional economic resilience.

This bill is about restoring opportunity and dignity for older Mainers in our coastal communities. I respectfully ask for your support of LD 1106, and I would be happy to answer any questions.

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