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RYAN D. FECTEAU
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

APRIL 9, 2025

**TESTIMONY OF SPEAKER RYAN D. FECTEAU REGARDING LD 483, AN ACT TO
AUTHORIZE A GENERAL FUND BOND ISSUE TO SECURE PROSPERITY FOR MAINE
FAMILIES AND BUSINESSES**

Good morning Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and esteemed members of the committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs. I am House Speaker Ryan Fecteau, and I have the privilege of representing House District 132, which is my hometown of Biddeford.

I am pleased to be here today to present LD 483, *An Act to Authorize A General Fund Bond Issue to Secure Prosperity for Maine Families and Businesses*.

This bill proposes to do three things: expand access to housing, expand access to childcare, and support communities through the expansion of public water and sewer infrastructure. Together, all of these support Maine's workforce and our communities.

I would like to run through these pieces briefly, one by one.

I think all members of this committee have heard me speak about the urgent need to create more housing in our state. After decades of under-building, we find ourselves with a housing crisis that is constraining our economy and making it harder for Mainers - and those who would like to become Mainers - to not only achieve the dream of home ownership, but even to find affordable rental housing.

The federal funds invested in housing during and after the pandemic helped us make meaningful headway. But I think we can all agree that we have much, much further to go on the issue of housing creation in our state. And now that the federal funds are phasing out, it falls to us as a state to commit to building the housing we need to keep our economy strong and growing.

This bill proposes a \$125 million dollar bond for housing, broken down into three buckets: \$80 million for Maine's affordable housing tax credit, \$25 million for the MaineHousing Authority rural affordable housing rental program, and \$20 million for MaineHousing's first-time homebuyer program.

These investments will help Maine build on the progress we've made since 2020, and support the creation of housing across our state in both rural and urban settings. We know from MaineHousing's report on housing production that more units are needed everywhere, with significant increases required in some of our more rural counties in order to meet demand and also to meet the goal of creating 84,000 new units by 2030.

MaineHousing does have some specific suggestions regarding the application of the bond toward housing production and the first time homebuyers program and we would defer to their opinion on how best to target those funds.

The second piece of my proposal relates to infrastructure - in particular, water and sewer access. A lack of access to public sewer and water infrastructure can be the difference between a 60-unit project and a 12 home subdivision in communities of all sizes across Maine.

The bill includes a \$75 million bond to expand this infrastructure in areas zoned for residential use, with a 50% local match requirement. This will help communities looking to work with developers by lowering the cost to expand public water and sewer, and in turn promote more housing starts for multi-unit dwellings.

The third piece of this bill is another topic you've heard me talk about before: access to quality childcare. Making sure moms and dads can find high-quality child care supports Maine's workforce and our economy. This section of the bond allocates \$100 million to establish a childcare infrastructure investment program with a priority on leveraging private-sector investment.

There have also been suggestions from folks in the childcare industry to improve the impact and execution of the program. These include changing the department which will administer the childcare bond from MaineHousing to the Office of Child and Family Services, and eliminating the match requirement for project awards of \$100,000 or less. All awarded funds for projects over \$100,000 must be matched 1 to 1 by private businesses, municipalities, philanthropic organizations, nonprofit entities, or a combination.

We know that smaller childcare facilities/businesses are also a key piece of creating a web of affordable, high-quality child care across our state. The goal is to lower the barriers to constructing, retrofitting, or renovating childcare facilities of all sizes.

This bond aims to shore up the housing and childcare investments we have made in the past few years, and encourage future development that will support Maine's workforce.

Expanding access to housing and access to high-quality childcare is critical to the lives of Maine people and to Maine's continued economic growth. Communities who want to expand housing but are constrained by public water and sewer limitations will benefit from support to overcome that hurdle.

I appreciate the opportunity to present the bill to you this morning, and I would be happy to take any questions.