



May 1, 2025

The Honorable Chip Curry, Senate Chair
The Honorable Traci Gere, House Chair
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development
Cross Building, Room 206
Augusta, Maine 04330

Subject: LD 1637- An Act to Reform the Midcoast Regional Redevelopment Authority

Dear Senator Curry, Representative Gere and the Honorable Members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee:

My name is Daniel Stevenson, and I am the Executive Director of the Midcoast Regional Development Authority. I am here today to speak neither for or against LD 1637 but to provide some information and insight into the work of this public instrumentality of the State of Maine, my approach to leading this organization and why I believe that the Board has called to me to this position. I have been in the field of economic development for over twenty-five years having worked with three local communities and ten years with the Department of Economic and Community Development with the State of Maine. As the Economic Development Director of the City of Biddeford, I worked with the Council, the business community and other stakeholders to purchase and tear down the Casella Waste to Energy Facility located in the downtown. This laid the foundation for the revitalization of downtown Biddeford and a \$50 million mixed use development in the downtown. I then served eight years as the Economic Development Director of Westbrook where I served as the lead point person for the City on the Rock Row Development project transforming an old Blue Rock quarry site into a \$900 million mixed use redevelopment. Working with the regional chamber, the City Council, Waterstone Properties Group and others, we were able to integrate public transit access, nature trails, commercial and institutional development and community spaces that have revitalized and transformed the former quarry into a new vibrant urban hub. This development has not only increased Westbrook's tax base but also stimulated further private investment in the region.

During the past 25 years, I have worked with many local, regional and state officials, stakeholder organizations, and the public having varying backgrounds and skill sets. It is in this light that I attest to the importance of collaboration, teamwork, transparency, strategic partnerships and ongoing community building as necessary ingredients that build trust, strengthen partnerships and aligns shared values. This approach promotes pragmatic problem identification and implementation of sensible solutions to support economic and community development.

To demonstrate the sincerity of my inclusive philosophy since starting my employment with MRRA, I have done the following:

- ❑ Met with local and regional stakeholders including Brunswick Landing business owners, representatives from the Brunswick Area Citizens for a Safe Environment (a local advocacy group organized around issues related to the existence of toxic waste sites at the Naval Air Station in Brunswick); weekly meetings with the Chair of the Brunswick Town Council, Town Manager and the Chair of the MRRA Board of Trustees, Nick Nichols; the Brunswick United for a Safe Environment (a citizens group monitoring the August 19 AFFF release), the Brunswick Legislative Delegation and members of the Brunswick Town Council;
- ❑ Gained better understanding of immediate and long-term environmental concerns that establish public safety as a priority, including recent mitigation efforts in response to the AFFF accidental release, and clean-up action steps moving forward. When I came on board, I established a four-point program to deal with AFFF fire suppression system shutdown, concentrate removal, rinse and cleanse system, and ongoing testing for all hangars as approved by State Fire Marshalls Office and Town of Brunswick Fire Chief. The Maine DEP and EPA are aware of and supportive of this plan. To date, we have removed AFFF from Hangar 6, the Navy completed the removal and flushing of AFFF concentrate from Hangar 4 following the August 19 release. Earlier this week I signed a contract for the removal of AFFF from Hangar. Only the north bay of hangar 5 has an active AFFF system (one of three bays) that we are working on to put a plan in place to turn off this system.
- ❑ With the April 2024 designation of PFAS/PFOA as a CERCLA contaminant, all property will be transferred by the Navy with a Uniform Environmental Covenants Act (38 MRSA§3001) requirement as was the most recent transfer of the quarry site on the western side of the property. We are in support of this amendment.
- ❑ MRRA's most recent Strategic Business Plan adopted in January of 2024, provided a description of MRRA's eight guiding principles including that: *MRRA will be good stewards of the land and environment*. MRRA welcomes the addition/clarification of our role as a steward of the environment and incubator for new and emerging clean technologies as it carefully manages the site's natural resources, protects wildlife habitats, and supports businesses with environmentally responsible practices, reinforcing its role as a responsible and forward-thinking steward of the environment.
- ❑ Section 7 of the bill removes the exemption of the Midcoast Regional Redevelopment from the Site Location of Development Law. At this point time, all of the former Navy buildings with the exception of the former Air Traffic Control building have been put into civilian reuse. MRRA would not object to the removal of this exemption on all future development.
- ❑ Implemented public messaging and engagement strategies to ensure transparency.


During my research in considering my candidacy for the Executive Director's position, I learned Midcoast Regional Redevelopment Authority (MRRA) had achieved both state and national recognition for its swift and effective transformation of the former Naval Air Station Brunswick into a thriving center for innovation, industry, and economic development. MRRA had received the Community Leadership Award from the Association of Defense Communities (ADC) for demonstrating innovation and excellence in the successful redevelopment of the former Naval Air Station Brunswick, the 2011 Champion of Economic Development Award from the Maine Development Foundation, in 2017 the Maine ENVY Award from the Maine State Chamber of

Commerce, in 2013 Maine Real Estate Development Association's Nobel Project Award, in 2016 Small Business of the Year Award from the Southern Midcoast Chamber of Commerce, and the 2017 Community Leadership Award of the United Way of Midcoast Maine. Former Executive Director Steve Levesque was named the 2018 MaineBiz Business Leader of the Year for Non-Profits.

A critical factor in MRRA's success has been the composition of its Board of Trustees, which has, since its inception, been composed of experienced professionals with specialized expertise in areas essential to redevelopment - such as real estate, finance, law, marketing, utility management, and banking. When openings occurred the Governor's office often consulted with MRRA leadership on the skills that a new Board member would bring to the Board given the challenges that were before the organization and allow the Board to remain focused on long-term economic development goals guided by industry best practices.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel B. Stevenson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending from the end.

Daniel Stevenson
Executive Director