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Testimony of Representative Ambureen Rana introducing
LD 1806, An Act to Create a Residential Rental Unit Registry
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development

Good afternoon, Senator Curry, Representative Gere and esteemed members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee. My name is Ambureen Rana, and I represent House District 21 in Bangor. I'm grateful for the opportunity to introduce **LD 1806, An Act to Create a Residential Rental Unit Registry**.

This concept has come through multiple iterations over the last few sessions. And, as we've continually worked on this issue, we've become aware of more entities seeking the data that a residential rental unit registry could collect. The bill before you attempts to balance the need for critical housing data for planning purposes and emergency responses, with the work of tracking that information and making compliance as easy as possible. We are utilizing an existing database by housing the rental registry within the Corporations Division of the Secretary of State's office. We are also using an existing form by adding additional questions to the annual registration process for companies that provide residential rentals. The bill also has a structured timeline crafted to allow for the programming needs of the Division and to establish the best possible data sharing and integration strategies.

However, given the other work of this committee to track housing building permits, and the desire of multiple state agencies to make additional reforms to the corporate registration process, I have amended the bill into a resolve directing the Secretary of State's office to study the best means to achieve all three of these goals: to collect and share critical information on Maine's residential rentals, to update the corporate registration process and to integrate this data with other state planning data.

What would this bill do as initially drafted?

LD 1806 would create a statewide rental registry to allow the state to track basic information about residential rentals. This is increasingly important as we invest state resources in addressing our housing crisis.

For years, Maine has conducted studies and other research to understand better the nature of the state housing market and trends in residential rentals. Creating a dedicated registry will allow the state to track

the supply of rental housing statewide, provide critical information for municipal staff and leaders on local rental housing and ensure a point of contact for emergency services and tenants.

Throughout this session, the team working on this bill has been meeting with interested parties and deepening our understanding of the data collection needs. We have also been working with the Secretary of State's team to design a data collection tool that places the least amount of burden on registrants. Within these conversations, the idea for the resolve came to fruition.

How would the rental registry work?

The registry would be implemented in phases to accommodate the need to update the back end of the Corporations Division systems. Asking the Secretary of State to convene a working group to assess the implementation timeline would allow that timeline to incorporate considerations from LD 1184 and the staffing of the Maine Office of Community Affairs.

As it currently is drafted, in the first phase, beginning in Spring 2026, when a company registers with the Secretary of State for its annual corporate registration, it will check a box indicating that one of the company's purposes is to rent residential housing in Maine. This will create an estimate of how many businesses in Maine operate residential rentals.

In the second phase, beginning in Spring 2027, businesses will check the residential rental box and provide basic information about their rentals on an additional form. That information will include:

1. The name and contact information for the owner of the residential rental unit;
2. The name and contact information of the manager or management company for the residential rental unit or registered agent of the owner if the owner is not directly involved with the administration or management of the residential rental unit;
3. The name and contact information of related companies to this business;
4. The physical address of the residential rental unit for enhanced 9-1-1 services and the mailing address of the residential rental unit, if different; and
5. The total number of residential rental units on each property
 - a. The draft in front of you includes a request to report the number of occupied and vacant units. If the committee decides to go forward with the original bill instead of the resolve, that should be amended out. It was added by the revisor's office, and in the interest of time, instead of asking the revisor's office to amend, I figured we could take it out here through the committee process.

In the third phase, beginning in Spring 2028, the residential rental registration process data shall be shared with municipal governments and made available to the public.

Again, I am asking that this committee vote ought to pass on the amended bill – a resolve directing the Secretary of State's office to study the best means to achieve all three of the stated goals: to collect and share critical information on Maine's residential rentals, to update the corporate registration process and to integrate this data with other state planning data.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this amended proposal, and I'd be pleased to answer any questions you have for me.

Resolve, to Convene a Working Group to Design a Residential Unit Registry within the Maine Corporations Division

Preamble. Whereas, the state of Maine is lacking key data on its rental housing, including where rentals are located, the types of rentals that exist, and the contact information for these rentals; and

Whereas, without this critical data, the state, our regions, and our communities lack the information they need to develop better policy solutions for different aspects of our housing crisis; and

Whereas, the State has many programs to benefit landlords and tenants, but does not have a means of communicating with them about those opportunities; and

Whereas, having up-to-date address and contact information for residential rentals will facilitate better outreach for programs ranging from energy efficiency upgrades to residential housing navigators and rental assistance; and

Whereas, a local inventory of rental housing is critical data for code enforcement teams, building inspectors, planners and community development officials; and

Whereas, many local governments lack the capacity to create a local registry; now, therefore, be it

Sec. 1. Working group. Resolved: That the Department of the Secretary of State shall convene a working group, referred to in this resolve as "the working group," to evaluate potential solutions regarding the creation of a residential rental registry using the Corporations Division annual registration and renewal process including by identifying the type of business entities are engaged in.

Sec. 2. Working group membership. Resolved: That, notwithstanding Joint Rule 353, the working group membership is as follows:

1. Town/City Planners
2. Municipal officials with experience maintaining a local registry and in need of the data from a registry
3. Code enforcement
4. Landlord
5. Tenant
6. Emergency Response agency/State Fire Marshall?

Sec. 6. Staff assistance. Resolved: That the Department of the Secretary of State shall provide necessary staffing services to the working group; Legislative Council staff support is not authorized.

Sec. 7. Report. Resolved: That, no later than February 15, 2026, the working group shall submit a report that includes its findings and recommendations, including any necessary implementing legislation, to the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development. The joint standing committee may submit legislation related to the report to the Second Regular Session of the 132nd Legislature.

----- End of Resolve-----

Questions Corporations Division would like to discuss generally:

- **What objective, outside sources of lists of business types can be used to categorize a dropdown menu?**
- **Which reports should this reporting be required on?**
- **What is the Corporate Division responsibility with regard to answering questions regarding information provided by entities to be listed? (getting at tension of not being the regulatory agency)**
 - **Shall one of the duties be to determine the most effective way to share data from the registry with state and local officials, the judiciary, and the public?**
- **What else needs to be in the work group's responsibilities?**
 - **To determine the timeline and steps for implementing the registry to align with the annual corporate renewal process and programming updates**
 - **To determine the fee structure necessary to cover the cost of implementing a registry in the decided phases?**
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