



May 8, 2025

Testimony in Support of LD 1829: An Act to Build Housing for Maine Families and Attract Workers to Maine Businesses by Amending the Laws Governing Municipal Land Use Decisions

Senator Gere, Senator Curray, and members of the Committee on Housing and Economic Development:

My name is Tyler Norod, and I submit this testimony in strong support of LD 1829 on behalf of Westbrook Development Corporation. This legislation offers a critical course correction in how Maine supports housing development statewide. If we are serious about addressing our housing crisis, we must confront the procedural and political barriers that make it extraordinarily difficult to get homes built—even when they are desperately needed and widely supported in principle.

Across Maine, one of the most formidable barriers to new housing is not a lack of demand—it's a resistance to change. The proposed Housing Development Resolution Board established by LD 1829 is a much-needed safeguard against the political unpredictability that developers face when proposing housing that local gatekeepers find inconvenient or unpopular.

A recent example illustrates this all too clearly. In 2024, Westbrook Development Corporation proposed a thoughtfully designed 107-unit affordable housing development in Cumberland. The plan had the support of a majority of the Town Council and was informed by professional studies commissioned by the town that explicitly recommended a development of this size and scale on the exact site. And yet, a local referendum led by well-organized opposition effectively killed the project. The result: more than 100 affordable homes lost due to local resistance, not policy failure or market forces.

What makes this defeat particularly frustrating is that it contradicts the will of the broader community. A 2022 resident survey in Cumberland showed that 76% of residents either strongly or somewhat supported new town policies to encourage affordable housing. This is not uncommon. Mainers generally support housing creation, but as these numbers indicate, local resistance often grows once a specific project is presented and allows a vocal minority, not the silent majority to dictate how our communities grow. As a result, in

the absence of statewide guardrails, that vocal minority can—and does—shut down much-needed development.

This dynamic plays out not only in Cumberland but across the state. In recent years, we have seen similar community-level obstruction in Kittery, Cape Elizabeth, Kingfield, and elsewhere. Proposals are denied, rules are changed mid-process, or developers are quietly told not to bother applying because the political environment is hostile or capricious.

The cost of this resistance isn't always visible, but it is deeply felt. When developers observe the fate of projects like ours in Cumberland, they understandably hesitate to invest time, money, and energy into other proposals. Without a path to a fair, timely, and expert review of local decisions—as LD 1829 would provide—many worthwhile housing developments are never even proposed. We are not just losing homes at the ballot box; we are losing them in planning meetings, in legal uncertainties, and in whispered warnings that "this town won't go for it."

This is why it is so difficult to measure NIMBYism's true impact. The deterrent effect is powerful, and its consequences are systemic: fewer homes, longer waitlists, higher rents, and continued displacement of working Mainers.

LD 1829 is a targeted response to these challenges. By creating a Housing Development Resolution Board with the authority to review and resolve appeals efficiently and with technical expertise, this bill gives developers and housing providers something they desperately need: predictability. It ensures that projects are judged on the merits—not the moods—of local politics.

The bill also makes sensible changes to land use standards that reflect the realities of today's housing needs. It prohibits growth caps in designated growth areas, limits exclusionary zoning practices, and streamlines administrative reviews for modest and affordable developments. These updates modernize Maine's approach without eroding local involvement where it matters most.

LD 1829 is not an overreach—it's a necessary correction. It recognizes that Maine's housing crisis cannot be solved one town at a time when local politics can veto homes our state badly needs. It creates a predictable and fair playing field where a vocal minority that is comfortably housed can't prevent much needed housing for others. It empowers local governments to plan thoughtfully but also ensures that planning leads to actual results—not to inaction or obstruction.

For every family that has been priced out of their community, for every worker who commutes an hour because they can't afford to live near their job, and for every developer who has quietly walked away from a project that might have helped—this bill offers hope.

On behalf of Westbrook Development Corporation and all those working to create more homes for Maine people, I ask you to support LD 1829.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

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