

Testimony of Patrick Woodcock
Before the Joint Standing Committees on Housing and Economic Development
In Support of L.D. 1829
“An Act to Build Housing for Maine Families and Attract Workers to Maine Businesses by
Amending the Laws Governing Municipal Land Use Decisions”

May 12, 2025

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and members of Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development, my name is Patrick Woodcock. I am here on behalf of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, representing a network of 5,000+ small to large businesses. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on L.D. 1829, “An Act to Build Housing for Maine Families and Attract Workers to Maine Businesses by Amending the Laws Governing Municipal Land Use Decisions.” I want to thank Speaker Fecteau for bringing this legislation forward and working to unlock housing development.

The legislation before you has a number of components that have already been considered in other bills and subject to public hearing. While our testimony will be dedicated to the Housing Development Resolution Board, we do want to reinforce our support for the other sections of the bill which we believe would unlock housing development and create reasonable standards to address Maine’s housing supply constraints that are holding back Maine’s economy.

Turning to section one of the legislation, we believe that a Housing Development Resolution Board has the opportunity to encourage fair application of municipal decision-making with respect to housing development and speed resolution of any disputes. Increasingly we have witnessed economic development projects be rejected not by permits but by the lengthy process of overcoming all of the legal challenges and appeals. Housing projects are particularly vulnerable as it is challenging for project developers to expend the resources to overcome legal challenges or meritless municipal rejections. The Housing Development Resolution Board presents an opportunity for both sides to cut down the duration of a legal dispute and create clarity for project development. It should be noted that this concept has been applied in New Hampshire and was recommended in the HR&A report. Last month more than 20 organizations, including the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, recommended to the Legislature to adopt a Board to quickly resolve disputes.

It should be noted that Resolution Board cannot be a substitute for thoughtful municipal planning or local engagement in project development. However, in many cases housing development and municipal planning that have employed best practices are being circumvented by referendum and rejected without merit. These projects should have the opportunity to be fairly and quickly resolved.

We encourage the Committee to support L.D. 1829.