



*Testimony of*  
Erik C. Jorgensen  
Senior Director of Government Relations & Communications  
Maine State Housing Authority

*Before*  
The Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development (132<sup>nd</sup>)

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 Curry, Representative Gere, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development, I am Erik Jorgensen Senior Director of Government Relations and Communications at the Maine State Housing Authority (MaineHousing) and I am submitting this testimony in support of **LD 1829, an act to create a state-level housing development resolution board.**

MaineHousing has been helping Maine people own, rent, repair, and heat their homes since 1969. We are an independent state authority (not a state agency) created to address the problems of unsafe, unsuitable, overcrowded, and unaffordable housing. We are authorized to issue bonds to finance single family mortgages for first time homebuyers and for affordable multi-family housing.

We are also authorized to administer a number of state and federal programs, including rental subsidies, weatherization, fuel assistance, two housing block grants, the low-income housing tax credit program, and homeless grant programs. We receive state general fund revenue for homeless programs and receive a dedicated portion of the real estate transfer tax for the Housing Opportunities for Maine (HOME) Fund.

MaineHousing does not typically testify on land use bills – but in the case of LD 1829 (as well as LD 1921, which you heard yesterday) we wanted to weigh in with support, simply because these bills, both seek to address the land use policy barriers that get in the way of Maine reaching its housing goals. Our experience has shown that projects in any part of the state can be derailed by small groups of citizens seeking to block them, especially by appeals. These projects have gone through extensive local permitting and have followed zoning rules, but they still can be shut down despite having complied with all the rules. We see this happening in large towns and small, in different parts of the state. No region seems to be immune to this.

If Maine is to realize its well-publicized housing production goals, we feel that there is an urgent need to streamline and make predictable the development process. Having some sort of housing resolution board, as proposed in both 1829 and 1921, would be an important tool to help prevent projects that are following a community's rules, from being derailed.

The specifics of such a board would need to be worked out, such as whether it is situated within the Judicial Branch or elsewhere, along with the details of how such a board would work.

MaineHousing is not testifying to those details, just on the merit of this concept as a possible and reasonable tool to facilitate housing production in Maine. The other elements of LD 1829 also seem to offer common sense zoning reforms that would make the development process more uniform from town to town across the state.

People in every municipality are looking for housing, and it would therefore seem fair that every municipality should have a role in getting the state out of its current housing shortage. LD 2003 started this work a few years ago, and this bill simply continues that progress in a logical direction.