



***Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development***

*Laura Mitchell, Executive Director, Maine Affordable Housing Coalition*

**In Favor - LD 2164 An Act to Assist Communities with Converting Vacant School Buildings into Housing**

*February 10, 2026*

Chair Curry, Chair Gere, and members of the Committee on Housing and Economic Development:

I'm testifying on behalf of the Maine Affordable Housing Coalition, a nonprofit with 140 member organizations that build, design and finance affordable housing. We advocate for the creation and preservation of housing affordable for all Maine people.

LD2164 creates a flexible funding source to support the **adaptive reuse of vacant school buildings into housing**. This helps address Maine's housing shortage while revitalizing community assets and leveraging past investment.

We have strong precedent in Maine for this approach. The **Snow School Apartments** in Fryeburg transformed the former Snow School into **28 affordable apartments for older adults**, leveraging MaineHousing low-income housing tax credits and construction financing to make the project viable. This reuse preserved a community landmark and provided homes close to services and infrastructure.

Another compelling example is the **former McLain School in Rockland**, recently approved for redevelopment into **29 affordable workforce apartments** through a combination of MaineHousing funding, tax credits, and local planning collaboration. Seventeen units will be in the historic McLain building, with 12 additional units in a new structure. This multigenerational, centrally located housing meets local workforce needs and supports downtown vibrancy.

Adaptive reuse of projects like these, that are based on local planning for intown housing, face **technical and financial barriers**. Older school buildings frequently require substantial upgrades for **code compliance, accessibility, energy efficiency, environmental remediation, and unit reconfiguration**. These costs often occur before a project can attract tax credit equity or permanent financing. LD 2164 would provide **gap funding early in the development cycle**, helping municipalities cover feasibility studies, environmental assessments, and early pre-development work that are otherwise difficult to fund.

By unlocking these conversions, LD 2164 supports the efficient use of existing infrastructure, reduces pressure to build on undeveloped land, and expands housing options in village centers and downtowns where people want to live and work.

On behalf of the Maine Affordable Housing Coalition, please vote **Ought to Pass** on LD 2164. Thank you.