

Testimony of Patrick Woodcock
Before the Joint Standing Committees on Housing and Economic Development
In Support of L.D. 2164
“An Act to Assist Communities with Converting Vacant School Buildings into Housing”

February 10, 2026

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development, my name is Patrick Woodcock, and I am here on behalf of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, representing a network of more than 5,000 businesses across the state. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of L.D. 2164, *“An Act to Assist Communities with Converting Vacant School Buildings into Housing.”*

The Chamber has long supported dedicating additional resources to housing development, particularly for middle-income households. The legislation before you today would help lower the barriers communities face when repurposing vacant school buildings into housing. The redevelopment process is complex for school districts and municipalities, often requiring environmental mitigation, the development of RFPs, and careful planning to position projects for success.

Former school facilities—such as the former Bangor High School or the Nathan Clifford School in Portland—are often located in highly accessible areas, making them especially well-suited for housing, including for older Mainers who value proximity to services and community amenities.

While we recognize the constraints facing the state budget, we believe these resources could catalyze school conversion projects that may be more cost-effective than new construction, while expanding local tax bases and helping the state meet our housing goals. For these reasons, we respectfully recommend that this proposal be placed on the short list of programs the Legislature considers for funding this year.