



Maine Real Estate &
Development Association

Supporting Responsible Development

In Opposition to LD 445, An Act to Stimulate Housing Production by Increasing the Threshold Before Participation in the Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code Is Mandatory

February 27, 2025

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

On behalf of the Maine Real Estate and Development Association, please accept the following testimony in opposition to LD 445, An Act to Stimulate Housing Production by Increasing the Threshold Before Participation in the Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code Is Mandatory. MEREDA's members consist of a wide range of people and organizations involved in real estate development in Maine, from architects and contractors to bankers and attorneys to developers and municipalities. Our members work together to support responsible development in Maine.

MEREDA was involved with the original development of MUBEC because our members knew that the vast differences among the many municipalities' codes made development slow, costly, and complex. In the past, our architects and engineers needed to develop plans with different sets of rules for each community. Our contractors needed to ensure that they were training their staff to build differently in different communities, sometimes just across the street from another project. Our code enforcement officers were trained individually in each community to learn the standards set there, and they couldn't easily cover for one another across our municipalities.

This bill proposes we remove this uniformity, a uniformity that ensures the safest, most energy efficient standards are met in our homes and commercial buildings across the state. This bill wouldn't just remove small towns from meeting the standards of consistency; it would remove many of what we consider small-to-mid-sized cities. Topsham, a city with significant commercial development along the I295 corridor; Brewer, a small city with significant retail along its Wilson Street corridor; and Old Orchard Beach, with its plethora of hotels, would all be exempt from MUBEC. In fact, with the proposed 10,000-resident threshold, only 22 of Maine's 430 municipalities would be participating.

MEREDA understands that the current MUBEC standards are often expensive and don't work well for communities in which rents and property values are lower. Our members would be very much in favor of a deep conversation about and relaxation of some of the standards within MUBEC for all communities. But the reason for the

existence of the Uniform Building and Energy Codes is the uniformity across communities. It is this uniformity that makes real estate development faster, less expensive, and simpler.

We strongly encourage you to oppose this bill. The premise in the title of this bill is fundamentally incorrect; removing uniformity will inhibit housing production. Particularly in this moment in which new construction of housing is so incredibly important to our residents and indeed, our economy, a change of this size would significantly reduce our ability to meet Maine's needs for our future.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

Elizabeth Frazier

On behalf of Maine Real Estate & Development Association

efrazier@pierceatwood.com