



Maine State Legislature
Committee on Housing and Economic Development
February 27, 2025

Testimony of Conservation Law Foundation in Opposition to L.D. 445,
*An Act to Stimulate Housing Production by Increasing the Threshold Before Participation in
the Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code Is Mandatory*

Chair Curry, Chair Gere, and members of the Committee on Housing and Economic Development, my name is Emily Green and I am the Director of Clean Mobility at the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF). CLF appreciates the opportunity to submit this testimony in opposition to L.D. 445.

CLF is a member-supported nonprofit advocacy organization working to conserve natural resources, protect public health, and build healthy communities in Maine and throughout New England. In Maine for almost four decades, CLF works to ensure that laws and policies are developed, implemented and enforced that protect and restore our natural resources; are good for Maine's economy and environment; and equitably address the climate crisis.

CLF urges the committee to reject L.D. 445 because, while well-intentioned, it would decrease the quality of housing stock in Maine, leading to higher energy costs in rural areas where relief is most needed.

L.D. 445 would raise the threshold for Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code enforcement from municipalities with more than 4,000 residents to those with more than 10,000. This change would significantly impact the number of municipalities covered by protective building codes, and therefore, the number of Maine households.

Building codes set minimum standards for building construction and design including energy conservation, indoor air quality, and mechanical systems. Maine's building codes serve many purposes, with the most basic function to ensure that buildings are safe and habitable.

Beyond ensuring that buildings are sound, Maine's building codes make buildings more efficient, healthier, and better performing. Building codes have enormous potential to go even further, serving a critical role in the state's efforts to cost-effectively decarbonize while improving Mainers' quality of life. Improvements in insulation, windows, and heating and cooling systems, for instance, reduce energy loss and improve thermal integrity. This means more comfortable homes for Mainers and lower utility bills. At a time when energy costs are top of mind for many—with rural households disproportionately burdened¹—the state should be doing *more* to reduce

¹ Ross, L., Drehobl, A., & Stickles, B, American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, *The high cost of energy in rural America: Household energy burdens and opportunities for energy efficiency* (2018), available at <https://www.aceee.org/research-report/u1806>.

energy waste and energy bills, not allowing more builders to cut corners and create more inefficient housing stock in Maine.

We urge the Committee to reject L.D. 445. We recognize the bill's good intentions to stimulate housing production but object to the proposition of building inefficient, costly housing at Mainers' expense.