

Verbal Testimony – Written for February 10, 2026

Legislative Document - No. 2164

(An Act to Assist Communities with Converting Vacant School Buildings into Housing)

Good Afternoon Senator Curry & Representative Gere & Distinguished Members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee,

My name is Todd Souza, I'm the Town Manager for the Town of Union. I'm here providing testimony and support on behalf of LD 2164. For not only Union, but other small Communities throughout the State that may be struggling to "repurpose" an economic asset like our Thompson Community Center (TCC).

Since 1989 when the School closed, the Town has found a way to give the TCC a new purpose or job, until 2021. Since then, the Town has embarked on what I would call a very thorough and thoughtful process to redevelop the TCC. Spending over one-hundred thousand dollars in development costs, insurance and stabilization maintenance. This figure doesn't include funds received through grants and non-profits; it also doesn't consider the hundreds of staff and community hours working through this process. Since 2018 this project has been on the ballot for four referendum/election votes. From development & ownership options, to raising funds to support the project, to the creation of a Tax Increment Financing District.

Each step of the way the Town worked to remove barriers to make the project more attractive to developers – actions such as the previously mention - creation of a TIF district, applying and receiving Historical Tax Credits, partnering with Maine Water to improve utilities to the site and engaging in brownfield environmental assessments.

With this said, we still need help! LD 2164 could be that help, not only for Union, but Maine. The Town of Union is committed to repurposing our facility into Senior Housing and the technical support and funding requested in LD2164 would be another tool to help us reach our goal.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

We support LD 2164 and I'd be happy to answer any questions.

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