



April 10, 2023

Senator Teresa Pierce
Representative Traci Gere
Committee on Housing
Maine State Legislature
c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: Written Testimony in opposition of LD 214

Dear Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and Honorable Members of the Committee on Housing:

My name is Richard A. Hooks Wayman, and I am a resident of Maine and serve as the President & CEO for Volunteers of America Northern New England which is headquartered in Brunswick. I offer this written testimony in opposition of LD 214: An Act to Amend the Laws Regarding Zoning and Land Use Restrictions to Limit Certain Requirements to Municipalities with a Population of More than 10,000.

Volunteers of America (VOA) Northern New England is a faith-based community nonprofit that works with households experiencing deep poverty, disabilities, and homelessness. We are a proud provider of quality, affordable housing for low-income older community members and veterans. Many of our program sites are in rural towns across six counties in Maine.

LD 214 appears premature and offers policy recommendations before any economic harm has been noted by local municipalities. This bill, LD 214, along with LD 1154 and LD 665, seek to delay and make optional the provisions of LD 2003 that was enacted in 2022 to increase the density of affordable housing, allow for the development of generally four units of housing on vacant lots, and incentivize the construction of accessory dwelling units. However, LD 2003 does not officially impose changes for municipalities until this July. It is hard for us to understand how the obligations under LD 2003 need to be amended until its application and the presentation of information or evidence that it's having a negative outcome on local economies.

Further, LD 2003 was enacted with the recognition that Maine is facing a housing crisis not seen in several generations. Maine has a gap of over 20,000 affordable housing units. Our state is the second worst in the nation for tight rental vacancy rates, and rates have been rising at alarming rates. The Legislature passed LD 2003 in response to feedback from grandparents and parents who recognize that the next generation of

Mainers can no longer afford to buy their own home. Any tinkering with the policies established by LD 2003 would be unjustified given the lack of progress our state has made in producing affordable housing.

Now is not the time to limit the application of LD 2003. Further, the criteria that towns over 10,000 are the only target for incentivizing affordable housing development misses the fact that quality affordable housing is needed in all communities to grow our economy. LD 214 attempts to limit the standards under LD 2003 to municipalities with over 10,000 residents. However, this line is drawn too far given the fact that just twenty-two municipalities (out of over 480) meet this criterion.

I would ask you to oppose this bill. Thank you for your public service and dedication to Maine.

Sincerely,



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