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Testimony of Representative Poppy Arford supporting
LD 1694, An Act To Create the Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority
*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement
and Business*

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts and members of the Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business Committee, I am Poppy Arford, honored to represent House District 49, which embraces the western half of Brunswick. I am testifying as a proud cosponsor in support of LD 1694, An Act To Create the Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority.

Thank you, Representative Sachs, for this bill and for your testimony which lays out the details of the proposal. Out of respect to the committee and appreciation for Representative Sachs's thoughtful testimony, I will focus on why I support LD 1694 and not repeat what has already been so well stated.

Let me share an example that I have witnessed first-hand. In 1994, the Limestone community in Aroostook County was economically devastated by the closure of Loring Air Force Base. When many residents lost their jobs, which were dependent on the base, they were forced to leave Limestone to seek employment elsewhere. In one trailer park, maybe twenty homes were left abandoned, with nobody to sell them to. Years later, the park is in ruins, even as Limestone is slowly being redeveloped. In this park and elsewhere in Limestone, land bank funds could be used to revitalize properties to create needed affordable housing.

Limestone is just one of endless communities across the state that would benefit from the creation of the Maine Redevelopment Authority as proposed by Representative Sachs. That is why this bill has such strong statewide support. This support includes members of the statewide working group of municipal officials, regional planning organizations and experts. They recognize this proposal is a win-win for our towns and the state as a whole.

During my first term in the Legislature, I have been proud to work with my colleagues to identify innovative solutions to one of our state's most pressing problems: the need for safe, affordable housing in virtually every community of our state. The creation of the Maine Redevelopment Authority would be an important tool to meet that need while at the same time revitalizing unsafe, unutilized properties across the state.

Please support LD 1694 with a OTP vote. Thank you, and I am happy to answer questions.