



May 10, 2021

Senator Chip Curry, Chair
Representative Tiffany Roberts, Chair
Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business

Re: LD # 1694: An Act to Create the Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority

Dear Senator Curry and Representative Roberts and members of the IDEA Committee

I am the Program Director of the Maine Downtown Center at MDF. We serve as the statewide Coordinator for the National Main Street Program and we serve as a statewide resource for downtown revitalization. I am writing in support of LD 1694: An Act to Create the Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority.

The National Main Street Program is a 40 year-old approach to downtown revitalization and Maine has 10 Nationally accredited Main Streets and 15 state designated Downtown Affiliates. All 25 of these programs have one or more buildings that are abandoned, blighted, environmentally hazardous, underutilized, or compromised in some way. These buildings have not been rehabilitated because no private developer can make the financial investment work. The legislation, which is successfully working in 18 other states, will provide municipalities with a clear set of tools to address extraordinary costs, title issues, or other problems preventing the private market from engaging, and then move the properties back into the hands of the those who will do the redevelopment work. Land banks also provide a strong mechanism for public / private partnerships to help open up new market potential in places where there is no way for either the public sector or the private sector alone to overcome real entrenched challenges. The impact of this work is particularly impactful and important to Maine's rural cities and towns.

The Maine Downtown Center believes this legislation has the potential to spur on catalytic downtown revitalization projects around the state that otherwise would not be completed. We know from experience that downtown development projects drive additional projects while simultaneously they build community pride and consumer confidence, and enhance a sense of place. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Anne G. Ball'.

Anne G. Ball
Program Director