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***Testimony of Rep. Kristen Cloutier in support of
LD 1694, An Act To Create the Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement
and Business***

Good morning Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business. I am Kristen Cloutier and I proudly represent House District 60, part of my hometown of Lewiston. I am happy to submit testimony in support of **LD 1694, An Act To Create the Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority.**

Many of our communities, including mine, have recognized the need to address the issue of blighted, abandoned, and environmentally hazardous or functionally obsolete properties across our state. Creating the Maine Redevelopment Authority would build on the work that these communities and other stakeholders are already doing, including the statewide working group that convened eighteen months ago to address this very issue.

I was proud to serve as a member of Lewiston's Comprehensive Plan Committee in January 2017, when the Lewiston City Council adopted *Legacy Lewiston*, the City of Lewiston's comprehensive plan. This plan outlines future development and conservation within the City, and provides a foundation for determining effective public policy and land use decisions for the future, specifically calling for the establishment of a land bank.

Historically, abandoned properties have presented a significant challenge for the City of Lewiston. After going through foreclosure, the liens on a property may exceed the market value, there may be title defects, or others may have claims to the property. This results in a title that is not insurable, transferable, or of use to anyone. A property in this condition may become a drain on local taxpayers and lead to a loss in value for neighboring properties.

A land bank or land reutilization corporation helps communities deal with this problem by clearing the titles and liens against these properties and redistributing them for productive use. This bill establishes land banks at the municipal, regional, and state levels, providing a catalyst for new development that is imperative to addressing our state's housing crisis.

Finally, the creation of this Authority would have an immense impact on the revitalization efforts currently underway in many of our local communities. It is one of the few tools proposed this session that can actively create the 20,000 affordable housing units needed to meet demand here in Maine.

I am proud to cosponsor this legislation and hope you will support it.