



May 12, 2021

**Testimony in SUPPORT of LD 1694
An Act to Create the Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority**

Good morning members of the Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business Committee. My name is Eliza Cress and this testimony is on behalf of the Bicycle Coalition of Maine.

The Bicycle Coalition of Maine (BCM) is the statewide organization that advocates for bicyclists and pedestrians. We work to make Maine a better place for all people to walk and roll. The BCM supports LD 1694, which seeks to establish the Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority.

As the number of people living in and moving to Maine continues to grow, the development and redevelopment of land in Maine will have a significant impact on the ways that residents and visitors travel throughout the state. The passage of LD 1694 will establish municipal, regional, and state Land Banks, which are focused on the conversion of vacant, abandoned, and tax delinquent properties into productive use. It will also establish the Development Ready Communities Program to prioritize funding for local projects with a strong financial return, that meet local and statewide goals for sustainability and transportation.

Mainers take pride in the quality of life that the state's natural environment provides many of us. As our population continues to grow, it is imperative that we grow in ways that do not have a negative impact on the communities and natural resources that make living here unique. If passed, LD 1694 has the potential to ensure that the development and redevelopment of our communities is both financially and environmentally responsible.

As the statewide organization advocating for better connectivity for all modes of active transportation, we know that planning for redevelopment or further development plays a critical role in the quality of life within impacted communities. Research shows that residents in communities with access to affordable housing, equitable transportation opportunities, and green space are happier and healthier. Redeveloping blighted properties in urban and village centers go hand-in hand with creating walkable and bikeable communities and we know that well connected communities lead to strong economies and have the potential to strengthen our aging towns and cities.

In other states throughout the country, land banks have worked with housing authorities and land trusts to transfer rehabilitated properties to be used for affordable housing. In other instances, land banks have worked with environmental groups to create or reestablish green spaces.

Establishing a Land Bank Authority in Maine will allow the state and municipalities to improve the quality of life in communities where the redevelopment of otherwise neglected lots could have a positive impact. This bill has the potential to create more sustainable and livable communities through smarter, more financially viable community planning that includes active transportation opportunities to benefit both public and environmental health. For these reasons, we urge the committee to support, and vote to pass LD 1694.

Thank you for your time, and for your service to the state.

On behalf of the Bicycle Coalition of Maine,

Eliza Cress
Outreach Manager



