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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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**Testimony of Representative Traci Gere on LD 1694,
“An Act To Create the Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority”
May 13, 2021**

Good morning Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and distinguished members of the Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business. I am Representative Traci Gere, and I represent House District 9, which is Kennebunkport and coastal Biddeford and Kennebunk. I live in Kennebunkport. I am here to testify in strong support of LD 1694.

During times of major economic and technological change, the tried-and-true methods and relationships that we use to solve problems can stop working, leaving people feeling frustrated, stuck, and unable to move forward. In my experience, most often the cause of such paralysis lies in systems and structures, and not the people themselves - people want to solve problems and move forward, but either old systems and structures have become irrelevant or ineffective, or we simply lack new systems appropriate to the current situation.

We find ourselves in just such a situation in Maine. Old industries have declined or have changed fundamentally, and new industries and sectors are in early stages of development. As a result, our towns and cities are in various states of recovery and revitalization. Many communities are continuing to struggle mightily to define their next chapter, clean up run down properties, and create the affordable housing, community facilities, and commercial buildings they need.

The Land Bank bill attacks this challenge head on, by creating the new structures and systems needed to deal with the problem of blighted and foreclosed properties. It creates a system to provide the skills, money, and tools necessary to redevelop vacant and foreclosed properties, and makes this system available to all communities in Maine. It puts power in the hands of the people working to solve their problems, and does so by sharing expertise and services across communities and the state, so every town doesn't need to reinvent the wheel.

The Land Banks that will be created by the Redevelopment Authority will become a crucial link in the chain of revitalization, providing the redeveloped properties that can become home to affordable housing built through innovative new models, or new tele-working spaces, or modern industrial facilities, or whatever the people in a community envision for themselves.



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Access to affordable housing, in particular, is at a crisis point in our state. Other bills in the 130th legislature address other systemic and structural barriers to affordable housing development, including zoning, coordinated planning, fair housing access, finance, development, and property data management. LD 1694 provides the specific redevelopment solution for municipalities that need to deal with blighted, foreclosed properties in order to move forward.

I enthusiastically urge an Ought to Pass vote from the committee on this important bill.

I am available to answer any questions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Traci Gere".

Traci Gere
State Representative