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May 13, 2021

Good morning Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement, and Business:

RE: Support for LD 1694, An Act to Create the Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority

My name is Jonathan Hall, Field Services Manager with Maine Preservation, and I am here in support of LD 1694, An Act to Create the Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority. Land banking has been used effectively as a tool for community redevelopment and economic revitalization throughout the country for the past 50 years.

Many Maine communities have been struggling with the challenges associated with changing patterns of need and use in rehabilitating their existing building stock. Adaptive reuse of historic buildings is a proven strategy in the revitalization and economic growth of communities large and small across the nation. We feel LD 1964 would provide another valuable tool allowing communities to work effectively in public/private partnerships on rehabilitation projects that may not appear feasible based on market forces alone.

One concern we have is the use of the term: "Blighted, abandoned, environmentally hazardous and functionally obsolete property." Many properties have come to the attention of Maine Preservation that are in tax foreclosure or mortgage foreclosure. Some of these mortgages date to the 2008 recession and have passed through multiple financial institutions hands. Many of the buildings on these properties are not blighted or functionally obsolete. Environmental hazards like lead paint and asbestos are regularly mitigated in rehabilitations. This language implies that the problem is with the buildings. Instead, the problem is with the difficulty or inability to get these properties into the hands of a new owner who will improve them. We would prefer to condense this description to merely "abandoned properties," which focuses on the property itself without focusing on the reuse potential of the buildings that are on it.

The Federal and State Historic Tax Credit Programs have proven invaluable in rehabilitating many of Maine's abandoned and obsolete historic mills, schools, and commercial buildings, with \$600 million dollars invested in these rehabilitations since 2008. Even prior to these tax credits, half of the construction industry has traditionally been rehabilitation of existing buildings. Community land banking has the potential to effectively augment use of the HTC program while allowing municipalities greater access and flexibility in adaptively re-using neglected and underutilized historic properties to boost local tax revenues, create jobs and improve community vitality.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jonathan Hill". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned in the upper right quadrant of the page.

Field Services Manager

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