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Senator Chip Curry, Senate Chair
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Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business

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

Good Morning, I am pleased to present testimony today as the Economic Development Director for and on behalf of the Town of Rumford strongly in favor of the legislation as proposed. You have heard many details of the legislation already and will likely hear more to come. We strongly support the legislation as proposed in all aspects.

More significantly we are also very concerned with the timing of this legislation. The committee working on this bill has done so transparently and openly for well over a year and represents municipalities throughout the State of Maine either directly or through membership based organizations such as the Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments, the Kennebec Valley Council of Governments, and the Northern Maine Development Corporation to name a few.

This legislation represents in effect a direct request from local governments to state legislators, the Legislature as a whole and the Executive Branch to provide specific assistance on a matter of great concern to hundreds of Maine communities. There are many smaller communities represented through their regional organizations who will benefit from this program and who do not have the resources, the time, or the ability to handle the functions inherent in a Land Bank. We also feel that there is a very compelling case for immediate action due to existing and pending enhanced federal grant opportunities.

Today the Town of Rumford is proud to help lead this effort alongside the City of Sanford, the City of Caribou, the regional planning organizations, advocacy organizations and private development interests in the pursuit of improved development opportunities for every community in Maine. Most especially we are proud to advocate on behalf of those who have experienced economic decline, blight, stagnation, abandonment, and environmental contamination. We know all too well the burdens these conditions represent and understand that many communities smaller than ours will never have the resources to address these issues on their own.

The direct impact of blighted, derelict, abandoned and contaminated properties throughout Maine affects everyone in part due to the manner in which state revenues are shared and state aid is calculated for schools. Our statewide tax base is deeply affected by the extensive blight that is seen in our most impoverished communities. By directly addressing this challenge through the provision of the necessary services to prepare a

property for redevelopment the State of Maine, its municipalities or unorganized territories and their regional planning organizations can reduce the burden imposed by economic decline, especially in rural areas, and help build a brighter and more prosperous future in the places that need it the most.