



May 10, 2021

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

My name is Delilah Poupore, director of the Main Street program known as Heart of Biddeford, and I am here in full support of LD 1694, An Act to Create the Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority.

When I was introduced to this legislation, I was immediately surprised by how many problems it can solve by taking compromised or blighted properties and turning them into assets for communities in Maine. I have worked to revitalize Biddeford's Main Street for 10 years, and I can tell you that blighted properties create strong and detrimental impressions. In Biddeford through the pandemic we've been able to hold on to the vast majority of our businesses, and even added two new restaurants and eight new retail businesses. Yet, I still hear concerns about the few buildings that have proven to be too expensive to redevelop. To our community and potential developers these blighted properties hold more weight than I think they ought to, but that is a reality I am constantly working against.

If all LD 1694 did was help demonstrate to our community and potential investors that progress is underway (which it is), it would positively impact our revitalization efforts.

However, this bill accomplishes a lot more than that. It will help address housing shortages, which are severe in our part of the state. It will increase long-term tax-revenues for the buildings affected as well as for the surrounding buildings. It even makes a dent in the climate emergency by ensuring development occurs where infrastructure already exists.

I hope you will give strongest consideration of this bill.

Sincerely,

Delilah Poupore
Executive Director

Mission Statement:

The Heart of Biddeford in partnership with the City of Biddeford, the business community, property owners, and residents, fosters economic development and improves the downtown and quality of life within its boundaries by supporting existing businesses, attracting new businesses, promoting the downtown through events and working to beautify the urban core.