



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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

The bipartisan bill LD 1694, “*An Act to Create the Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority*”, was presented to you in May at the public hearing. I have attached my original testimony to refresh your memories as to the “who? what? when? why? and how?” of the Land Bank Bill. If you wish to revisit the incredibly positive testimony from the diverse coalition of over 50 supporters representing economic development, housing, environmental advocacy, and municipal groups at the public hearing, you can find it [here](#). Based on your initial feedback and excellent questions, I amended the bill before the scheduled work session and sent those changes back to you. You will find those changes in the proposed amendment in **red**.

Given that the IDEA Committee asked for additional legal review of the eminent domain section, and that many state agencies are involved in this bill, I respectfully asked that the bill be carried over in lieu of a full work session in May. I am grateful that you did so in a unanimous vote. The stakeholder group and I worked with members of the Mills Administration beginning August 26th, 2021. Many meetings, emails, and phone calls ensued, and final changes were made December 23, 2021. The resulting edits are indicated in **blue**. While there were not many final changes, it was an important process for all parties to become familiar with the benefits that this legislation can bring to every community in Maine.

The Administration’s legal counsel did review the document, and suggested a minor edit to the eminent domain section to clarify that the power is limited to the explicit purpose and function of the Land Bank Authority. Tweaks were made for consistency of Department head designees, and one date was changed from 2022 to 2023 to give systems time to implement this legislation. Finally, changes were made to reinforce what we stressed at the public hearing – that participation in this program is voluntary for municipalities of any size, with guidelines and support for every stage of redevelopment that a municipality wishes to engage in.

The federal government’s support for land banks has also increased since we last met; \$5 billion in federal funding has already been approved for land banks through regular infrastructure appropriations (\$1.5 billion brownfields/land banks + \$3.5 billion for superfund sites), and pending federal legislation contains an additional \$1.5 billion specifically for building demolition and land banks. Having an established state Redevelopment Land Bank Authority is critical for bringing these funds to Maine.

I look forward to discussing the bill further with you at the work session. Members of the stakeholder group, who have now been working on this bill for almost two years, are available as well to provide technical expertise.