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Testimony of Sen. Eloise Vitelli supporting
LD 1694, An Act To Create the Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority
*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement
and Business*
May 13, 2021

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and esteemed members of the Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business Committee, my name is Eloise Vitelli, and I represent Senate District 23, which includes all of Sagadahoc County and the Town of Dresden in Lincoln County. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 1694, “An Act To Create the Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority.”

This bill presents an opportunity for a new approach to development in Maine. While some parts of our state have boomed in recent years, attracting private investors from around the country, rural and economically disadvantaged areas have been left by the wayside. At the same time, low- and middle-income Mainers in every part of the state have found it more and more challenging to find affordable housing for themselves and their families. We need to be looking for solutions that encourage the sort of productive development desperately needed in almost every Maine city and town.

Creating a land bank in Maine would give us the opportunity to do just that, using a system that has already proven effective in other states. Reinvesting in abandoned, blighted, obsolete, and other challenging properties already in our communities makes sense for many reasons. While rehabilitation of an existing structure isn’t always the best choice, avoiding new builds where possible can decrease cost, preserve history and limit negative impacts on the environment. If a new build, or conversion to a green space, makes more sense for a particular location, a land bank can help invest in a solution that is best for the community.

Establishing a land bank will allow us to take problem properties that are currently driving down property value, draining tax dollars, and posing a danger to our communities and turn them into something productive. A land bank would allow the state to obtain additional federal funding while increasing long-term tax revenue; it’s a fiscally responsible strategy.

We all have a vision for what our towns can be, and with thoughtful consideration and coordination a land bank would be a great tool to use in realizing those visions. Thank you to Representative Sachs for her great work on this bill, and thank you to the Committee for its consideration.