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***0Testimony of Sen. Eloise Vitelli introducing
LD 1240, Resolve, To Review Barriers to Regional Solutions for Housing Choices
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing
April 16, 2021***

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester, esteemed members of the Labor and Housing 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. I am before you today to introduce LD 1240, “Resolve, To Review Barriers to Regional Solutions for Housing Choices.”

Maine is a great place to live, as we all know and as many newcomers this past year have discovered. As excited as we are to welcome these new Mainers and their many skills and talents, it’s highlighted the housing challenges our state has faced for some time. Developing diverse and affordable housing options in the coming years will be critical to growing Maine’s economy. We must ensure that Maine is a livable place for a variety of individuals, families and communities.

Housing is not a standalone issue; in planning for housing options, we must also consider land use regulations, transportation infrastructure and more. As we strive towards the climate goals summarized in the Maine Won’t Wait report, we must also do this with an eye towards sustainable and environmentally friendly growth. These are big goals, and they will require a high degree of planning and coordination across our state. Regional planning will be key.

This bill directs the Office of Community Development to conduct a review of the existing barriers to regional solutions to making housing affordable, accessible, available, functional and compatible with strategies outlined in the Maine Won’t Wait report. By identifying these barriers, we can begin to work towards solutions that allow municipalities to work together on these big issues.

This bill will help present us with a broad overview of current barriers, which we will need to consider, in concert with other legislation and efforts across state and local government, to move forward. I know this committee is hearing other bills that can more immediately address issues of homelessness and workforce housing, and it is my hope that this bill will help us gain the knowledge we need to plan further into the future.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill, and I would be happy to take any questions at this time.