



19 Community Drive • Augusta, Maine 04330 • (207) 622-7501 • Fax: (207) 623-3590

Testimony in Support of LD 1656 (“An Act To Promote Energy-efficient Affordable Housing”)

**J. Andrew Cashman on behalf of the Maine Association of REALTORS®
May 10, 2021**

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing, my name is Andy Cashman. I am a Partner at Preti Flaherty and I am here on behalf of my client, the Maine Association of REALTORS®, which is a professional trade association with over 5600 members state wide. Our members represent both buyers and sellers and are involved in residential and commercial transactions. Our membership also includes affiliates, which are those professionals involved in real estate transactions, such as bankers, closing agents, title agents, appraisers, building inspectors, surveyors, etc. The Maine Association is a member of the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR) which is the largest trade association in the country.

The Maine Association of REALTORS® strongly supports LD 1656. The bill is a thoughtful and well-reasoned approach to address the affordable housing need in our state.

The bill proposes \$100 million for the Maine State Housing Authority to build energy-efficient affordable housing and it reflects strategies outlined in Governor Mills’ Maine Climate Council’s climate plan.

We support this bill because it focuses on the fundamental cause of the affordable housing problem: a lack of supply. We simply do not have enough affordable housing in Maine and need to build more – either through entirely new housing units or by modifying existing structures. The focus on energy efficiency in this bill ensures that these new housing units will also be more affordable to operate. We have strongly opposed other bills that simply seek to raise taxes in the form of increasing the Real Estate Transfer Tax or creating new “fees” (taxes) on non-primary residential properties. Ultimately, those proposals do not ensure that funds go toward affordable housing – much less building, and increasing the supply of, new affordable housing. LD 1656 does both: it allocates funds that can only be used to build affordable housing. This is exactly what is needed to address the affordable housing problem in our state.

For these reasons, we respectfully and strongly urge you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1656. Thank you for your time and consideration.



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