



## **Testimony of Liza Fleming-Ives**

On behalf of the Genesis Fund

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing

*In Support of LD 2003, An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Commission To Increase Housing Opportunities in Maine by Studying Zoning and Land Use Restrictions*

March 7, 2022

Senator Daughtry, Representative Sylvester, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing, my name is Liza Fleming-Ives. I am the Executive Director of the Genesis Fund, a nonprofit Community Development Financial Institution based in Brunswick, focused on financing the development of affordable housing in Maine.

The Genesis Fund works with communities all over the state to bring together resources to create and preserve affordable and workforce housing. We hear from municipal leaders and nonprofit partners frequently about the ways that the shortage of affordable housing negatively impacts the economic and social well-being of their communities. We know that the lack of affordable housing makes it difficult for employers to fill job openings, for seniors to downsize and age in place, and for young people to remain in or return to the communities in which they grew up.

While the new state affordable housing tax credit and the commitment of \$50 million in state economic recovery funds are critical investments that will increase production of new affordable housing, these funds, and the development that they make possible, are not enough on their own to address Maine's shortfall of over 20,000 affordable homes.

The scale of this shortage demands that we remove barriers to new housing production such as overly restrictive zoning and land use ordinances that stand in the way of making sensible affordable housing possible. This bill does that by implementing the recommendations of the State Commission on Housing & Zoning.

LD 2003 will foster better conditions for housing construction and give homeowners new opportunities to build housing on their own land. It will create the Housing Opportunity Program at DECD to provide technical assistance and financial incentives for communities to learn about and adopt model zoning ordinances, to determine growth zones and to develop policy that increases housing density where feasible while protecting working and natural lands.



By removing these barriers, and providing technical and financing assistance to municipalities, multiple strategies can be effectively deployed that will all together increase rental and ownership options desperately needed in Maine communities.

I encourage you to pass LD 2003. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.