



Volunteers of America®

NORTHERN  
NEW ENGLAND

March 6, 2022

Senator Matthea Daughtry  
Representative Mike Sylvester  
Committee on Labor and Housing  
Maine State Legislature  
c/o Legislative Information Office  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

**RE: Testimony in support of LD 2003**

Dear Senator Daughtry, Representative Sylvester, and Honorable Members of the Committee on Labor and Housing:

My name is Richard A. Hooks Wayman, and I am a resident of Maine and serve as the President & CEO for Volunteers of America Northern New England which is headquartered in Brunswick. Volunteers of America (VOA) Northern New England is a faith-based community nonprofit that develops and maintains affordable housing for older persons, persons with disabilities, and United States veterans. VOA is also a nonprofit member of the Maine Affordable Housing Coalition, and I personally serve on their Board of Directors. I write in support of LD 2003.

As this Committee knows, Maine is facing an economic and social crisis due to the lack of housing. Every day, VOA fields calls from older citizens, veterans, and persons with disabilities desperate to find safe and affordable housing accommodations. All of our senior affordable housing complexes have long waiting lists, and it is a national disgrace that we allow our U.S. veteran or their family members to face homelessness.

VOA recognizes that your vote for LD 2003 represents a balancing of interests between municipalities and the needs of low-income households, given the bill's creation of obligations on municipalities in requiring ADU placements within single-family zones, requiring four-unit construction on single-family lots, and prohibiting growth caps on the production of new units. However, the magnitude of the current housing crisis, the suffering it causes to our citizens, and the tremendous drag housing deficits have on our economy call us take decisive action.

Developing affordable housing is a complicated endeavor that relies on the right matrix of funding, community support, and appropriate zoning and land use. As noted by the State's Commission, land in

Maine is often restricted to single family homes. More needs to be done to empower people to build housing on the land they own and reform local zoning to be more flexible for multi-family affordable housing.

The State has recently made significant investments in affordable housing capital investments with \$50 million released to build new units and \$80 million more through the Affordable Housing Tax Credit. On top of this, federal funding for senior housing (Section 202), disability housing (Section 811), and homeless supportive housing (HUD HOME Program) is increasing. This represents a golden opportunity to increase our housing stocks. However, VOA and other nonprofit organizations are worried that this influx of state and federal funding will experience barriers to new communities due to existing zoning and land use restrictions. Relying solely on traditional publicly-financed multi-unit rental developments has substantially failed in creating the necessary scale of development required by our escalating need.

The balance must now tilt toward incentives for affordable housing development in all communities. As a developer and owner of affordable housing in rural communities, VOA understands that smaller municipalities may need financial support to analyze reforms in their zoning and land use policies. That's why we are so excited to see this bill's proposed creation of priority development zones within communities and new funding to municipalities to support municipal ordinance development and technical assistance. This bill not only offers smart investment in support of rural Maine communities, it also empowers municipalities to talk through tough zoning issues to accomplish better conditions for housing construction and offers incentives if they adopt policy changes.

There has never been a higher demand for workforce affordable housing in Maine. Maine families and children deserve investments in their future, and LD 2003 will support smaller and rural municipalities in exploring their development needs. I would ask you to give LD 2003 serious consideration. Thank you for your public service to Maine!

Sincerely,



Richard A. Hooks Wayman  
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Richard Hooks Wayman  
Volunteers of America Northern New England  
LD 2003

Please find attached written testimony in support of LD 2003. Last night I accidentally attached a draft testimony narrative. Thank you. - Rich Hooks Wayman, Volunteers of America Northern New England