



March 7, 2022

LD 2003 – An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission To Increase Housing Opportunities in Maine By Studying Zoning and Land Use Restrictions

Augusta Housing Authority offers its support for LD 2003.

While there has long been a shortage of housing in Maine, we have watched that shortage grow to crisis levels over the last two years in the face of the pandemic. This is a problem now so grave that it will take a multi-pronged approach coming from several angles and sustained over many years to meet the growing need. We are confident in the recommendations of the Commission to Increase Housing Opportunities in Maine and that the solutions outlined in LD 2003 will go a long way to ensuring every Mainer has a safe and affordable place to call home.

Augusta Housing serves the City of Augusta and 19 surrounding towns through various programs including the Housing Choice Voucher Program, commonly referred to as Section 8. We also develop new affordable housing in the areas we serve. In wake of the pandemic and face of a full-blown housing crisis, we are now working on four separate housing developments that together will bring close to 100 units of housing to Augusta. According to the most recent needs calculation from MaineHousing, an additional 449 family and 425 senior affordable housing units are needed just within the City of Augusta in order to meet the need. Relying solely on publicly financed large-scale housing developments simply cannot alone get the job done.

The housing crisis I describe to you today is not a problem limited to Maine's larger cities. Here in Augusta, we see it bleeding over into the 19 rural towns we serve and for the first time we are hearing from these smaller towns as they reach out to us in our capacity as a housing developer wanting to do whatever they can to expand housing opportunities in their small communities. In working with these towns, the biggest challenge we have found is that the passion to help is there but often the first hurdle that must be overcome is zoning. These small towns often lack the funding and capacity to make the changes needed. The bill before you today would provide the funding necessary to help build capacity through zoning changes and brings many other solutions that combined will form the comprehensive package needed to address Maine's housing crisis.

We encourage committee members to support this bill and thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Amanda Olson
Executive Director