



Testimony in Support

LD 1356, An Act to Improve the Local Referendum Process by Increasing the Percentage of the Population Required to Submit a Local Referendum Question

April 20, 2023

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, and Honorable Members of the State and Local Government Committee;

On behalf of the Maine Real Estate and Development Association (MEREDA), I am testifying in support of LD 1356, An Act to Improve the Local Referendum Process by Increasing the Percentage of the Population Required to Submit a Local Referendum Question.

MEREDA is Maine's premiere trade association representing commercial real estate and the state's housing creators. MEREDA members are housing creators, engineers, architects, designers, bankers, lawyers, brokers, and many other organizations involved in the real estate industry. MEREDA's guiding principle is the promotion of responsible real estate development – responsible real estate development *is* community development. Through the advocacy efforts of its Public Policy Committee, MEREDA works to advance a more fair, practical, and predictable policy landscape for housing creation in Maine.

MEREDA believes that, in the age of siloed media communications, social media that simply reinforces beliefs rather than examining today's issues with a critical eye, it is important for public policy proposals that are strongly demanded by the voters be the ones that make it to the ballot – otherwise, policies should be discussed through our deliberative legislative processes. Our institutions of government are more important now than ever and circumventing them to achieve policies that were created in a vacuum, with no stakeholder input, is not the way to ensure good governance.

MEREDA also feels that the referendum tool can be used at the local level to retroactively undermine housing projects – typically led by NIMBY interests. The State has clearly indicated its desire to prioritize housing creation. The State's interest in solving the housing crisis is clear – it is a human health and safety issue. Given the State's significant interest in solving this statewide issue, it is appropriate for the State to take measures to make it harder to undermine those efforts.

We urge the State and Local Government to support LD 1356 with an Ought to Pass report.

Sincerely

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