



# MAINE AFFORDABLE HOUSING COALITION

## Joint Standing Committee on Housing & Economic Development

### Testimony of Laura Mitchell, Executive Director, Maine Affordable Housing Coalition in favor of LD128 – An Act to Support Permitting of Certain Multifamily Housing Developments Under the Site Location of Development Laws, Sponsored by Senator Teresa Pierce.

Hello, Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development.

**My name is Laura Mitchell.** I am the Executive Director of the **Maine Affordable Housing Coalition.**

I spent half my childhood in public housing and have a masters in environmental science. This bill combines two of my passions – homes for all Maine people, and saving Maine’s natural integrity.

The Maine Affordable Housing Coalition is a nonprofit with 140 member organizations working to create and preserve affordable homes in our state. **We support LD128 to streamline Maine’s permitting of multifamily housing that is currently adding unnecessary red tape, time and cost to building vital affordable housing.** In 2023, the State commissioned a housing study that stated that Maine needs 80,000 new homes by 2030. This year, the State shared a roadmap to meeting that goal. Streamlining processes was the number one priority.

Here are three things what we know from our member’s experiences working through DEP approval processes that we believe highlight the need for streamline state funded affordable housing:

1. Even with lengthy DEP defined timelines for review and approvals (195 days), projects get stuck in limbo often adding up to a year in carrying costs and construction price increases of 5-10%. The state and towns see lost or delayed tax revenue from extended timelines, and the delays dilute the state investment into these housing projects.
2. After DEP approval, any minor changes such as name of ownership or simplifying the project scope for less impact can have 6 month to 1 year delays that have led to other funding source timelines passing and backing out. This has resulted in much needed affordable housing projects with years of planning getting scrapped.
3. DEP review requirements actually incentivize building affordable housing in green space rather than previously developed areas on water and sewer – which is completely counter to the critical environmental values these processes should foster. Further, the law rewards building less housing on larger lots.
4. A lack of clarity on soil management on previously developed sites is unnecessarily filling up Maine’s solid waste facilities with non-hazardous soils at extremely high cost, or adding a year or more to project timelines.

While LD128 will help address some aspects of the inefficiencies and contradictions in the DEP process, MAHC would like to highlight additional areas for rulemaking improvement:

1. Institute an expedited review for affordable housing projects – particularly with state funding
2. Increase the 4 acre threshold for review and apply different review metrics for housing in a town’s growth zones with water, sewer or busline, that doesn’t have significant habitat impacts.
3. Increase fees to support DEP staffing. Similar to elevator inspector fees increase.
4. Allow third party reviews by approved engineering firms. Similar to Historic Review.
5. Add an amendment review period limit. New applications have a long 195 day review, but amendments have no required review time and can lead to significantly longer wait times.
6. Add a directive to make soils review more efficient on previously developed sites.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in favor of LD128 and your consideration of encouraging deeper rulemaking improvements to encourage affordable housing in Maine.

3i Housing of Maine  
 55 Weston Avenue  
 AARP Maine  
 ABG Consulting, Gray  
 Acorn Engineering, Inc.  
 Allied Cook Construction, Portland  
 Anew Development LLC, Portland  
 Apartments for People LLC, Belfast  
 Archetype Architects, Portland  
 Associated General Contractors of Maine  
 Auburn Housing Authority  
 Augusta Housing Authority  
 Avesta Housing, Portland  
 Bangor Area Homeless Shelter  
 Bangor Housing  
 Bangor Savings Bank  
 Bank of New Hampshire, Falmouth  
 Bath Housing  
 Bath Savings Institution  
 Belknap Enterprise  
 Benchmark Construction, Westbrook  
 Boston Financial Investment Management  
 Bowman Constructors, Newport  
 Brunswick Housing Authority  
 Camden National Bank  
 Carpenter Associates  
 Catholic Charities of Maine  
 CEI, Brunswick  
 CHK Architects, Portland  
 City of Portland Department of Housing  
 Clark Insurance, Portland  
 Community Concepts, Lewiston  
 Community Housing of Maine, Portland  
 Conisigli Construction Co., Inc.  
 Cooperative Development Institute, South Freeport  
 Cooperative Fund of the Northeast  
 CREA, LLC  
 Credere Associates, Westbrook  
 Cross Financial Corp., Portland  
 Cumberland County  
 Danforth, Portland  
 CVS Architects, Portland  
 Developers Collaborative, Portland  
 Development Services of New England, Freeport  
 Dovetail Consulting  
 DrummondWoodsum, Portland  
 Dugan Construction, Inc.  
 Dunbar & Brown Construction  
 Eagle Point Development, LLC  
 Easpeady Consulting Group, Augusta  
 Eric Burmeister  
 Evernorth, Portland  
 Falmouth, Town of  
 Fort Fairfield Residential Development Corp.  
 Four Directions Development Corporation, Orono  
 Freeport Community Services  
 Freeport Housing Trust  
 Furniture Friends  
 Garrison Construction, Augusta  
 Gawron Turgeon Architects, Scarborough  
 Genesis Community Loan Fund, Brunswick  
 Gorham Savings Bank  
 Great Falls Construction, Gorham  
 Grommes Pulaski Consulting LLC, Portland  
 GrowSmart Maine  
 Habitat for Humanity of Greater Portland  
 Habitat for Humanity York County  
 Hancock Lumber, Casco  
 Healthy Androscoggin, Lewiston  
 Hebert Construction  
 Home Start, Peaks Island  
 Homeless Voices for Justice, Portland  
 Housing Foundation, Orono  
 Housing Initiatives of New England, Portland  
 Housing Partnership, Portsmouth, NH  
 Hunt Capital Partners LLC, El Paso, TX  
 Island Institute, Rockland  
 Islesboro Affordable Property  
 Jensen Baird Gardner & Henry, Portland  
 John Anton, Consultant, Portland  
 Kaplan Thompson Architects, Portland  
 Kennebec Savings Bank, Augusta  
 Kennebec Valley Community Action, Waterville  
 Kennebunk Savings  
 KeyBank  
 Knox County Homeless Coalition  
 Lake City Investments, LLC  
 Landry/French Construction, Scarborough  
 LaRoche Consulting, LLC, Augusta  
 Lassel Architects, South Berwick  
 LB Development Partners, Portland  
 LeadingAge Maine & New Hampshire  
 Lewiston Housing Authority  
 M&T Bank  
 Machias Savings Bank  
 Maine Bureau of Veterans’ Services  
 Maine Community Action Partnership  
 Maine Community Bank  
 Maine Department of Health & Human Services  
 Maine Equal Justice  
 Maine Immigrants’ Rights Coalition  
 Maine Public Health Association  
 Maine Real Estate Managers Association  
 Maine State Building & Construction Trades  
 Maine Workforce Housing LLC, Portland  
 Mano en Mano, Milbridge  
 Manx Development LLC, Yarmouth  
 Mascoma Bank  
 Midcoast Regional Housing Trust  
 NBT Bank  
 Nickerson & O’Day, Inc., Bangor  
 North Haven Sustainable Housing  
 Northeast Rental Housing  
 Norway Savings Bank  
 Old Town Housing Authority  
 One Atwell C/Os, South Portland  
 Penobscot General Contractors  
 Penquis, Bangor  
 People’s United Bank  
 PM Construction  
 Portland Builders  
 Portland Housing Authority  
 Preble Street, Portland  
 Preservation Management, South Portland  
 Preti Floherty, Portland  
 Raise-Op Housing Cooperative, Lewiston  
 Realty Resources Management  
 Rental Housing Alliance of Southern Maine  
 Rick Whiting  
 Rumford, Town of  
 Sanford Housing Authority  
 Scott Simons Architects, Portland  
 Sea Coast Management Company, Topsham  
 Selmon House, Portland  
 Silver Street Development Corporation, Portland  
 South Portland Housing Authority  
 Sparhawk Group, Yarmouth  
 St. Germain  
 Sunrise Opportunities, Machias  
 S. W. Cole Engineering, Gray  
 Szanton Company  
 TD Bank  
 Textford Housing, Brunswick  
 The Caleb Group, Saco  
 The Eagle Point Companies, South Portland  
 The Housing Foundation  
 The Park Danforth, Portland  
 Thornton Tomasetti, Portland  
 Through These Doors, Portland  
 Total Construction Management, Winterport  
 TPD Construction Co., Sanford  
 United Way of Greater Portland  
 Utilite, Inc.  
 Veterans Inc., Lewiston  
 Volunteers of America of Northern NE  
 Washington County Assoc for Ret. Citizens  
 Westbrook Housing Authority  
 Western Maine Community Action, E. Wilton  
 Winton Scott Architects  
 Wishcamper Companies, Portland  
 WKC & Associates  
 Wright-Ryan Construction, Portland  
 Yarmouth Housing Collaborative  
 Year-Round Housing Corp., Long Island  
 York County Community Action, Sanford  
 York Housing Authority  
 Zachos Construction, Freeport  
 Zero Energy Design  
 Zoro Energy, Bangor