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Testimony in Favor 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

Greetings Senator Daughtry and Representative Sylvester and members of the Committee On Labor and Housing. My name is Bridget Quinn, Associate State Director of Advocacy and Outreach for AARP Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 2003 (Bill) today. While we support the overall objective of the Bill, we would also like to offer some recommendations amendments to the bill.

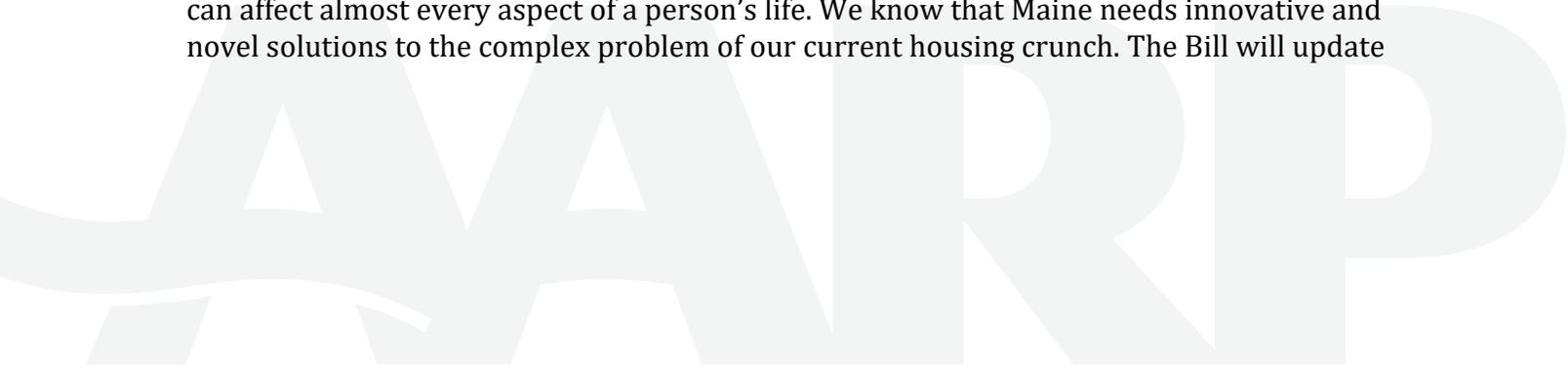
First, AARP Maine offers our thanks to the Commission to Increase Housing Opportunities in Maine by Studying Zoning and Land Use Restrictions and Senator Hickman and Speaker Fecteau as the chairs of the Commission for all their work.

As mentioned earlier, the Bill's objectives align with our policy as it proposes, among other things, the following changes:

- Prohibit growth caps, which will ensure access to more housing inventory;
- Provide technical assistance and grants to municipalities to implement the zoning changes. Thereby, assisting local governments, an effective implementation process;
- Increase density by allowing up to 4 dwelling units in a residential zoning area;
- Allow accessory dwelling unit (ADUs) to be located on the same lot as a single-family dwelling unit; and
- Create priority development zones that allow affordable housing developments to be built near community resources, including transportation, schools, and recreational & business opportunities.

AARP has been advocating for all our communities to be great places for people of all ages since our founding 60 years ago. AARP Livable Communities supports the efforts of neighborhoods, towns, cities and rural areas to be great places for people of all ages. We believe that communities should provide affordable, safe, walkable streets; age-friendly housing and transportation options; access to needed services; and opportunities for residents of all ages to participate in community life.

Housing is central to community and individual well-being. The type and location of a home can affect almost every aspect of a person's life. We know that Maine needs innovative and novel solutions to the complex problem of our current housing crunch. The Bill will update



Maine's zoning and land use laws to bring about needed change to increase access to housing.

According to Statista/AARP analysis of data available by United States Census Bureau (USCB), 151 older adults (aged 55+) faced evictions and 491 older adults (aged 55+) experienced homelessness in 2021 in the state of Maine. Unfortunately, in 2022, over 600 older adults (aged 55+) are expected to be evicted and over 600 older adults (aged 55+) are expected to experience homelessness in the state of Maine. LD 2003 would help in easing the housing supply and assist in lowering the eviction and homelessness rate by providing affordable housing to the residents of Maine.

Further, LD 2003 makes necessary changes to allow Mainers to construct ADUs with less barriers. An ADU is an independent housing unit that can be created on a single-family lot as an attached or detached unit and can be utilized in rural, suburban and urban communities. ADU's can fulfill many purposes in our communities including creating economical housing options and providing housing opportunities for people of all ages. According to the 2021 AARP Home and Community Preferences Survey, adults age 18 or older who would consider creating an ADU said they'd do so in order to:

- provide a home for a loved one in need of care (86%)
- provide housing for relatives or friends (86%)
- have a space for guests (82%)
- create a place for a caregiver to stay (74%)
- increase the value of their home (69%)
- feel safer by having someone living nearby (67%)
- earn extra income from renting to a tenant (63%)¹

However, we would also like to take the opportunity to present recommendations to LD2003:

- Under **Sec. 8. 30-A MRSA §4364-A (1) (A)** [Page 3], as part of the municipal incentive program in the first year a municipality is required to create a working group to review how the municipality's zoning ordinances and land use ordinances may impact the availability of housing in the municipality. We would request that the working group comprises of diverse stakeholders including minority organizations, organizations advocating for older adults, and housing and zoning experts.
- Under **Sec. 9. 30-A MRSA §4364-B (2)** [Page 4:], affordable housing development may not require more than 2 off-street parking spaces. While we understand this is not a mandate to create parking, however, we may want to be mindful of the cost of creating off-street parking, especially for affordable housing.

¹ AARP Livable Communities. *The ABCs of ADUs*. <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/housing/info-2019/accessory-dwelling-units-guide-download.html>

- Under **Sec. 9. 30-A MRSA §4364-B (3)** [Page 4], the person proposing to develop affordable housing, is required to maintain the affordability for 30 years. This requirement should also pass on to all property owners making sure the requirement does not change with the change in ownership of the property.
- Under **Sec. 11. 30-A MRSA §4364-D (3) (6)** [Page 6], there is a short-term rental restriction on ADU up to 30 days. We may want to revisit this restriction as typically imposing restrictions on ADU can be problematic for future sale and financing of property. We may want to consider reducing the restriction to 15 days.

We know that many older adults want to remain in their community as they age. ADUs can play a vital role by providing a housing alternative for seniors who either want to age in place or downsize or simply provide a place for loved ones to stay. It is going to take efforts from the state and all municipalities in Maine to solve our current affordable housing crisis that is affecting many Maine families. LD 2003 provides important updates to our state that will ensure Mainers have equitable access to innovative housing opportunities and less barriers to constructing the units we need.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, we urge this Committee to support LD 2003 and consider our recommendations.

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