

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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# 132nd MAINE LEGISLATURE

## SECOND REGULAR SESSION-2026

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Legislative Document

No. 2164

H.P. 1453

House of Representatives, January 13, 2026

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**An Act to Assist Communities with Converting Vacant School  
Buildings into Housing**

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Approved for introduction by a majority of the Legislative Council pursuant to Joint Rule 203.

Reference to the Committee on Housing and Economic Development suggested and ordered printed.

*R. B. Hunt*

ROBERT B. HUNT  
Clerk

Presented by Representative GERE of Kennebunkport.

1        **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

2        **Sec. 1. 30-A MRSA §5158-A** is enacted to read:

3        **§5158-A. Vacant School Housing Conversion Program; fund established**

4        The Vacant School Housing Conversion Program, referred to in this section as "the  
5        program," is established within the Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority, referred  
6        to in this section as "the redevelopment authority."

7        **1. Program.** The program authorizes the redevelopment authority to provide technical  
8        and financial assistance to a municipality that chooses to convert a vacant school building  
9        that has been closed and transferred to the municipality pursuant to Title 20-A, section  
10        4103, subsection 3 into a property that provides residential housing units, a percentage of  
11        which as determined in the memorandum of understanding under subsection 2 is dedicated  
12        as affordable housing as defined in section 5002, subsection 2.

13        **2. Program elements.** The redevelopment authority shall provide technical and  
14        financial assistance to a municipality that applies to the program in a manner determined  
15        by the redevelopment authority and meets the criteria as established by the redevelopment  
16        authority for participation in the program as determined by the redevelopment authority. A  
17        participating municipality shall enter into a memorandum of understanding with the  
18        redevelopment authority as a condition of participation. The technical and financial  
19        assistance provided by the redevelopment authority pursuant to the memorandum of  
20        understanding may include, but is not limited to:

- 21        A. Overseeing environmental assessment requirements, hazard abatement and clean-  
22        up efforts;
- 23        B. Determining the legal and financial feasibility of the property conversion;
- 24        C. Navigating zoning and regulatory requirements of development;
- 25        D. Acting as liaison between a municipality and state and local housing authorities;
- 26        E. Determining the specific goals of a conversion in alignment with a comprehensive  
27        plan or stated community priorities for development of the property;
- 28        F. Facilitating partnerships between municipalities that may seek to offer school  
29        buildings in each respective municipality as part of a package of properties for  
30        conversion;
- 31        G. Structuring a request for proposals from entities seeking to purchase the property;
- 32        H. Identifying financing strategies, incentive programs and potential funding sources  
33        available to a municipality or entity chosen to develop the property; and
- 34        I. On behalf of a municipality, acting as the administrator of a request for proposals  
35        crafted in accordance with the memorandum of understanding and as manager of the  
36        contract for development of the property.

37        **3. Maine School Conversion Fund; establishment and use.** The Maine School  
38        Conversion Fund, referred to in this section as "the fund," is established within the  
39        redevelopment authority to support the development of vacant school buildings into  
40        properties that will provide residential housing and that include a minimum percentage of  
41        units, as determined by the municipalities and specified in the memoranda of understanding

1 under subsection 2, dedicated as affordable housing as defined in section 5002, subsection  
2 2. The fund may not lapse but must be carried forward to carry out the purposes of this  
3 section. The fund may receive money from any available state, federal or private source.  
4 Money in the fund may be used by the redevelopment authority only when acting, pursuant  
5 to subsection 2, paragraph I, as the administrator of requests for proposals on behalf of a  
6 participating municipality and only for the purposes described in this section. Expenditures  
7 from the fund may include, but are not limited to:

- 8 A. Design and engineering feasibility studies;
- 9 B. Providing access to established utilities for the property to be developed;
- 10 C. Property improvements, such as demolition or environmental hazard mitigation  
11 necessary to attract requests for proposals from entities bidding to develop the vacant  
12 school buildings;
- 13 D. Hazardous material removal or abatement and other environmental clean-up efforts  
14 for which alternative sources of funding are not available;
- 15 E. Subsidies to support costs directly related to the affordable housing units included  
16 as part of the development; and
- 17 F. Capital investment to leverage matching funds or nonstate grants.

18 **4. Report.** Beginning February 1, 2027 and annually thereafter, the redevelopment  
19 authority shall submit a report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having  
20 jurisdiction over housing matters. The report must summarize the technical and financial  
21 assistance provided to municipalities in accordance with this section for the previous  
22 calendar year, the status of school building conversions supported by the program, the  
23 number of housing units created and an evaluation of the impact attributed to the program  
24 on the economy and housing supply of participating municipalities. The report must also  
25 include information collected by the redevelopment authority on the number of vacant  
26 school buildings for which conversion to a property that provides residential housing is  
27 feasible.

28 **Sec. 2. Appropriations and allocations.** The following appropriations and  
29 allocations are made.

## 30 **MAINE REDEVELOPMENT LAND BANK AUTHORITY**

### 31 **Maine School Conversion Fund N562**

32 Initiative: Establishes and provides ongoing funding to the Maine School Conversion Fund  
33 to assist municipalities with converting unused school buildings into properties that provide  
34 residential housing.

35 <b>GENERAL FUND</b>	36 <b>2025-26</b>	37 <b>2026-27</b>
38 All Other	39 \$0	\$5,000,000
40 GENERAL FUND TOTAL	41	\$5,000,000

## 42 **SUMMARY**

43 This bill establishes the Vacant School Housing Conversion Program within the Maine  
44 Redevelopment Land Bank Authority. The program provides technical and financial

1 assistance to municipalities seeking to develop vacant school buildings into properties that  
2 provide residential housing, including units dedicated as affordable housing. The bill also  
3 establishes the Maine School Conversion Fund, which is used to support the development  
4 of vacant school buildings. The bill provides for an ongoing annual appropriation of \$5  
5 million to the fund. The redevelopment authority administers the fund, and the fund's uses  
6 are limited to supporting development of vacant school buildings in municipalities that  
7 have memoranda of understanding with the redevelopment authority that it will act on  
8 behalf of the municipality to manage requests for proposals from entities seeking to develop  
9 the property. Finally, the bill requires the redevelopment authority to submit an annual  
10 report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over housing  
11 matters regarding the program.