



May 9, 2023

RE: Testimony of Build Maine in support of LD 1752, A Resolve to Prepare Pre-Approved Building Types

Dear Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and Members of the Joint Select Committee on Housing,

My name is Kara, and I am the Chair of Build Maine. We are a statewide non-partisan organization working to align fiscal, economic, environmental, and quality of life goals within our state through pragmatic and common-sense solutions to building our rural and urban communities.

Build Maine supports LD 1752, which proposes to prepare a range of building types for communities to access to address the housing crisis.

The initial bill language proposed that the process would develop 5 – 8 pre-approved buildings, each with 8 to 10 options, including small single family homes, duplexes (over/under, back/front, side by side), small apartment houses (3 to 10 units), small apartment buildings (6-12 units), and shophouses (2-8 units). Some of this detail seems to have been omitted from the revisors version.

Many communities across the state have an acute shortage of multi-family types and mixed-use building types. Even in rural towns, there is a documented need for studios and 1-bedroom units, which can be provided via small scale infill buildings. This bill is trying to help create pre-approved plans for these types. It is important to note that these types have not been routinely built in Maine for a long time, and significant knowledge has been lost. Buildings with more than 2 units are also more complicated and expensive to design because of increased life safety and other code requirements. There is significant time and effort saved for smaller scale developers by preparing plans for these types. This also provides a direct benefit to communities because these types are often very popular with the public.

Pre-approved buildings can work in communities that have either form-based codes or conventional zoning. Form-based codes are a zoning approach focused on allowing development to align more directly with a community's goals for growth. Building types are a separate but helpful tool that can either plug into a form-based code, or help a community with outdated zoning code by giving them a way to quickly enable certain buildings in specified areas.

In other places where this tool has been used, the building types have been part of a living catalogue, where types are added and removed to respond to emerging needs, and to adjust or remove types that aren't working due to financial, financing, or other reasons. The critical part of the catalogue development process is the open process used by the state to publicly vet the types, so that the catalogue has broad support and appeal and there are options that work for communities across the state.

Sincerely,

Kara Wilbur, Chair
Build Maine

BUILD MAINE

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