

Julia Bassett Schwerin
Cape Elizabeth
LD 546

Testimony for LD 546

Resolve, to Require the Preparation of Preapproved Building Types

March 4, 2025

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Cape Elizabeth

Representative Gere, Senator Curry, distinguished members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee, my name is Julia Bassett Schwerin, and I am a Broker and Realtor licensed in the state of Maine since 2005. I am also a Green Broker designated by the National Association of Realtors. I am not here representing my association or company. I am here to testify in favor of this bill with amendments.

The building trade is a noble industry, but one whose practices have not evolved a lot beyond when Joseph taught Jesus the rudiments of carpentry. Economies of scale have largely been bypassed as an accepted way of increasing volume and reducing cost. The analogy that I resonate with is its as if you wanted a new car, and the parts were dumped on your driveway and a series of crews were sent to assemble it over the course of many months in all kinds of weather and with a dumpster of sawn-off body parts and other debris to haul off to the dump after.

This bill intelligently pushes the industry toward some standardization that is sorely needed and long overdue. You don't have to be building Levittown to know that a subdivision has economies of scale when there are just a few design choices among a multitude of units. Or a modular home builder who offers several stock floorplans and allows few structural changes but lots of cosmetic differentiation. I do have some amendments for your consideration.

Section 1.1 should include at least 3 residential Single Family types, 1 duplex, 1 3-4 unit, 1 5+ unit condo townhomes. Designs should be run through Rescheck to ensure compliance with residential building energy code or Comcheck for buildings over 4 units, for the Performance path to compliance, and with the IECC 2021 code and stretch code data for compliance with the prescriptive path.

Section 1.2 to include units affordable to buy at 30% of mean area income.

Section 1.3 to include units approved by a panel of builders and real estate brokers

Section 1.5 to include actual blue prints for small builders to follow.

Section 1.6 to include production methods such as offsite modular and panelization construction and mass timber which are already commercially available and with nurturing will create economies of scale for the housing industry.

I am testifying in favor of LD 546 with amendments.

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