

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and esteemed members of the Joint Committee on Housing and Economic Development,

My name is Kevin Sutherland, I am a resident of Union Maine and a Town Manager in Newcastle.

I'd like to first thank the sponsors of this bill for creating a space to have this conversation.

With the suggested amendment below, I am writing in support of this bill.

There are three reasons for my support. Creating consistency in building and life safety code across the state, theoretically reducing sprawl, and identifying an opportunity to reduce the cost of building housing.

Creating Consistency

The Technical Building Codes and Standards Board was created in 2010 under M.R.S. 10 §9722. Duties of the board are to adopt and amend the Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code (MUBEC), identify, and resolve conflicts of the building code and life safety codes.

Municipalities with populations over 4,000 are required to enforce MUBEC. Those with fewer than 4,000 may not enforce anything other than MUBEC. The loop hole here are life safety ordinances that have been adopted by municipalities and may vary from community to community.

The State Fire Marshal's Office removed the NFPA sprinklers requirement for new single family and duplex in order to be consistent with the Technical Building Codes and Standards Board who had previously removed it from International Residential Code (which also has a requirement for sprinklers).

Currently, the municipalities who have a local ordinance (life safety code) are adopting the NFPA 101 that has sprinkler requirements. This is in direct conflict with the Technical Building Codes and Standards Board.

The language proposed here does not actually address this. If there is an appetite to fix this loophole, may I propose these amendments?

"8. Installation or use of fire sprinkler systems in certain homes. Notwithstanding any provision of this chapter to the contrary, a municipality may not adopt or enforce any provision of a building or life safety code, including ~~the Maine Uniform Building Code, the Maine Uniform Energy Code~~ or the Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code, or any NFPA codes adopted through the State Fire Marshall's office that requires the installation or use of fire sprinkler systems in a single-family dwelling or duplex."

Reducing Sprawl

If all communities are on the same playing field on this, it may help address some issues with sprawl. If one community, say Saco, has a code requiring sprinklers in single family homes and more rural neighboring communities such as Hollis and Waterboro do not, yet the price for a buildable lot are about equal - the price difference to install sprinklers and a system to support it may be the tipping point to build further away from urban centers and services.

Cost of Building Housing

By allowing single family and duplexes to be built without sprinklers across the state, this will help reduce the cost to build to some extent. Given the cost of everything these days, every little bit helps, right?

Thank you for taking the time today to listen.

Kevin