



PLANNING & CODE ENFORCEMENT

DATE: April 8, 2025

Senator Chip Curry
Representative Traci Gere
Members of the Committee on Housing and Economic Development - Room 206

RE: LD 1184 - An Act to Require Municipal Reporting on Residential Building Permits, Dwelling Units Permitted and Demolished and Certificates of Occupancy Issued

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jennie Poulin Franceschi. I am the Director of Planning and Code Enforcement for the City of Westbrook. I would like to provide testimony regarding LD 1184, with the recommendation of NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST.

As a municipality that actively participates in the monthly Census reporting for building permits and the Greater Portland Council of Governments regional yearly reporting, I would ask that further research into where the gaps in information truly are before an additional reporting burden is placed upon municipalities.

Specifically, some requests in this bill are for items that we are not going to be able to track, such as applications that do not proceed through our process. The applications need to be entered into our system to be documented and counted effectively. If an application is not complete, it is not entered into our system. In these instances, an applicant is advised on what is missing and what they need to provide to meet the threshold to be reviewed. If an application is denied, it is because it does not meet land use code or building code, so it is unclear why such information would be of any benefit to regional housing reporting.

I would refer you to the GPCOG's Regional Housing Data Collection Initiative that has been a great source of regional data for our community, especially when comparing Westbrook's growth to our region. This data demonstrates to our community members that Westbrook is growing at a rate that is roughly in the middle of the pack of our neighbors, even though it may appear otherwise. GPCOG collects building permits issued (broken down into 6 categories or ADU, SF, 2-unit, 3-4 unit, 5 or more and renovation/addition), certificate of occupancies issued (with same categories stated above), demolition permits, and zoning initiatives that occurred over the year. GPCOG asks municipalities, in the first quarter of the year, to submit our previous years' building information and GPCOG then assimilates that information into community specific pages and regional charts. (see link below)

<https://www.greatmaineneighborhoods.org/housing-dashboard>

If there was a way to dovetail the GPCOG program into this effort such that a municipality is only having to report out to one entity vs several entities, that would be most appreciated and the most effective use of local staff resources.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these comments.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennie Poulin Franceschi, P.E.
Director of Planning
and Code Enforcement