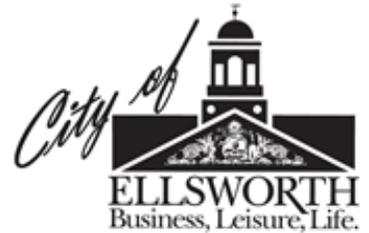




*From the Desk of the Fire Chief  
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**Subject: Urgent Opposition to "An Act to Reduce Housing Costs by Not Requiring Fire Sprinkler Systems for Single-family Homes and Duplexes": Prioritizing Safety Over Minimal Cost Reduction**

Dear Members of the Maine State Legislature,

I am writing to express my profound concern and strong opposition to the following,

***An Act to Reduce Housing Costs by Not Requiring Fire Sprinkler Systems for Single-family Homes and Duplexes***

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

***Sec. 1. 10 MRSA §9724, sub-§8 is enacted to read:***

***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 code, including the Maine Uniform Building Code, the Maine Uniform Energy Code or the Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code, that requires the installation or use of fire sprinkler systems in a single-family dwelling or duplex.***

**SUMMARY**

*This bill prohibits a municipality from adopting or enforcing a provision of a building code that requires the installation or use of fire sprinkler systems in a single-family dwelling or duplex.*

While acknowledging the importance of addressing housing affordability in Maine, this proposed legislation prioritizes a marginal cost reduction at the unacceptable expense of public safety and the potential for tragic loss of life and property.

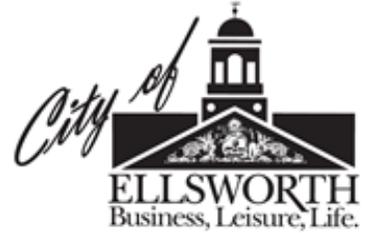
The assertion that eliminating the possibility of mandatory fire sprinklers will significantly impact housing costs is a dangerous oversimplification. Studies have consistently shown that the cost of installing fire sprinklers in new residential construction typically represents less than one percent of the total building cost. This relatively minor upfront expense provides an immeasurable return in terms of enhanced safety and reduced long-term financial burdens associated with fire damage.

**The evidence overwhelmingly supports the life-saving effectiveness of fire sprinklers.** According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the civilian death rate is 81% lower in homes with fire sprinklers compared to homes without them. Furthermore, the average property loss is reduced by approximately 70% in sprinklered fires. This data clearly demonstrates that fire sprinklers are not a luxury but a critical safety feature that protects occupants, firefighters, and the community as a whole.

This bill also disregards the fundamental principle of allowing municipalities to tailor building codes to their specific needs and circumstances. Local governments are best equipped to assess factors such as population density, access to fire services, and the prevalence of specific fire risks within their



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jurisdictions. By stripping away this local control, the state would be imposing a blanket policy that may not adequately address the unique safety concerns of individual communities.

Furthermore, it is crucial to consider the **long-term financial implications** of this legislation. Without fire sprinklers, homeowners are likely to face higher insurance premiums due to the increased risk of significant fire damage. The cost to the community in terms of responding to and recovering from more severe fires will also undoubtedly rise, potentially offsetting any perceived short-term savings in construction costs.

**This legislation disproportionately impacts vulnerable populations**, including children, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities, who may have greater difficulty escaping a fire without the early suppression provided by sprinklers. Ensuring their safety should be a paramount concern.

Finally, it's important to note the **environmental benefits** of fire sprinklers. By quickly suppressing fires, they significantly reduce the amount of water needed for fire suppression compared to relying solely on fire department intervention, thus conserving a valuable resource and minimizing water damage.

Instead of jeopardizing the safety of Maine residents, the Legislature should focus on exploring comprehensive and sustainable solutions to housing affordability that do not compromise well-established safety standards. This could include investing in affordable housing development, streamlining permitting processes, offering financial incentives for energy-efficient and safe construction, and addressing zoning regulations that may hinder the creation of diverse housing options.

I urge you to prioritize the safety and well-being of Maine citizens and reject this ill-conceived legislation. Please uphold the right of municipalities to implement building codes that prioritize fire safety and ensure that all Maine residents have the highest possible level of protection in their homes.

Respectfully,

**Scott Guillerault**  
**Fire Chief / Emergency Management Director**  
**City of Ellsworth Fire Department**