



April 25, 2025

RE: Testimony of Build Maine IN SUPPORT of LD 1247, An Act to Restrict Municipal Ordinance Requirements Regarding Housing Developments

Dear Senator Curry, 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 group 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.

We support LD 1247, which is part of the Policy Action 2025 slate of bills. The goal of Policy Action 2025 is to address barriers and create incentives for development that strengthens downtowns and villages of all sizes while pulling development pressure away from productive and open natural areas.

LD 1247 proposes to help address the housing crisis by restricting municipalities from requiring minimum lot sizes larger than 5,000 square feet in locally designated growth areas served by public water and sewer.

Bringing back walkable, affordable neighborhoods

A minimum lot size of 5,000 square feet is based on standard, traditional lot sizes found in most Maine villages and towns, and also promotes a pattern of development that is walkable and more financially productive for the municipal tax base.

Long-Overdue Changes

The State has invested in infrastructure to support smart growth, yet local zoning ordinances are acting as a barrier to achieving the State's goals of compact settlements while protecting and preserving open spaces. Many growth areas in Maine are still zoned for a minimum 1-acre lot size, which incidentally is also the minimum lot size in many rural areas, and the reason behind the sprawling out of Maine. The costs of sprawl were highlighted in a Maine State Planning Office Report from 1997, which called for local Planning Boards to adopt the needed zoning changes to reduce lot sizes in growth areas and increase them in rural areas, but many communities have not taken action, because changing zoning is actually very difficult. LD 1247 will help overcome the inertia, cost, and complexity of changing zoning by globally reducing minimum lot sizes in the places where municipalities have already identified they want growth.

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Making needed changes to LD 2003

LD 1247 also complements LD 2003 by opening up a simpler path for homeowners to participate in adding more housing. Currently, LD 2003 allows multiple units on a lot, but only by forcing a homeowner to become a developer, where they build the units themselves and rent them, or they create a condominium association. Many people lack the legal expertise and the financial resources to pursue either of these options, which has been a major impediment to increasing housing construction under LD 2003. However, by decreasing minimum lot sizes, a homeowner with a 1-acre village center parcel could divide their property into multiple village-scale lots, allowing them to sell those lots off to someone who wants to build.

Sincerely,

Kara Wilbur, Chair
Build Maine

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