



MAINE AFFORDABLE HOUSING COALITION

Joint Standing Committee on Housing & Economic Development

Testimony of Laura Mitchell, Executive Director, Maine Affordable Housing Coalition, 4.25.25

in favor of LD1272 - An Act to Address the Housing Crisis by Reducing Barriers to

Building More Accessory Dwelling Units – Sponsored by *Speaker Fecteau*

Hello, Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development. My name is Laura Mitchell, I serve as executive director of the **Maine Affordable Housing Coalition**. I am testifying in favor of LD1272 on behalf of the coalition, **a nonprofit with 140 member businesses and more than 500 individual members**.

This bill takes a critical step toward unlocking much-needed housing options in Maine by expanding flexibility and reducing regulatory barriers for the creation of accessory dwelling units, or ADUs. These modest, lower-cost homes—whether attached, detached, or located within existing homes—offer a powerful, low-impact solution to our statewide housing shortage.

Maine faces a severe housing shortage and ADUs must be part of the solution. Recent data from the National Low Income Housing Coalition shows that for every 100 extremely low-income renter households in Maine, only 47 affordable and available rental homes exist. Rents and home prices have risen faster than incomes, pushing housing increasingly out of reach for workers, seniors on fixed incomes, and young families alike.

LD 1272 addresses key barriers that have limited the usefulness of ADUs as a housing strategy:

- **It increases the number of allowable units per lot to four before triggering municipal subdivision review**, enabling a range of configurations that match modern housing needs—whether it's a single-family home with a couple of ADUs or a small-scale triplex with additional units.
- **It prohibits municipalities from requiring that ADUs be sprinklered** in most low-density residential contexts. This is critical, as the cost of installing sprinkler systems—often upwards of \$15,000 per unit—can be a project-ending obstacle for many homeowners and small developers.
- **It allows for ADU ownership flexibility**, including separate sale or transfer, and doesn't require owners to live on-site—making it easier for multigeneration families to manage property as their needs evolve.
- **It removes unnecessary density restrictions** for the first ADU on a lot, which is consistent with earlier state housing policy goals.
- **It also aligns zoning rules with practical development realities**, such as allowing ADUs on nonconforming lots so long as the unit doesn't increase the existing nonconformity.

These updates reflect real-world development challenges. ADUs are not a silver bullet, but they are a vital part of the solution—particularly for Maine's rural and aging communities. They can allow older Mainers to age in place, provide housing for caregivers or family members, and offer young residents an attainable path to housing.

LD 1272 will support a more flexible and inclusive approach to housing. We urge you to support LD 1272. Thank you for your leadership on housing.