

Liz Trice
Portland, Cumberland
LD 1681

April 29, 2025

Committee Chairs and Committee Members

My name is Liz Trice, I've lived most of my life in Maine, and have a masters' degree from the Muskie School in Public Policy and Community Development. Most of my work is finding ways to build housing affordably in existing towns and neighborhoods to increase vibrancy and walkability, while protecting our prized natural places including forest, farms, and coastline.

I currently work for Backyard ADUs in Brunswick, ME, which designs and builds high-quality Zero Energy Ready Homes/Apartments and Accessory Dwelling Units in backyards and on standalone land. Backyard combines personalized design, modular construction, and on-site finishing to create high efficiency homes quickly and less expensively than most new homes. Last year we built over 25 Accessory Dwelling Units, and we will build over 70 dwelling units in the coming year. Our typical small home is a well designed, spacious 800 sf two bedroom home that costs very little to heat or maintain. We invite you to look at our website backyardadus.com or visit our model home in Brunswick.

We believe that ADUs are an important part of solving Maine's housing crisis and reinvigorating small towns and villages because they consume less land and are less expensive, less controversial, and quicker to build than most other types of housing. Our homes are allowing seniors to downsize and boost their income, allowing aging parents to join their children, and homeowners to earn honest rental income.

We are in strong support of the intention of LD 1681

We are currently working with towns throughout Maine that want to incentivize housing on a scale that works for their communities. ADUs are the least inexpensive and quickest type of housing to build; now that ADUs are legal almost everywhere, we are able to build ADUs for as low as low \$250k project costs, and as quick as 8-10 months. There are about 450,000 homeowners in Maine, so that's a lot of potential ADUs.

Homeowners with good incomes or cash now have the option to build ADUs using finance products like interest-only HELOCs, and construction-style financing that takes into account the new value and income the ADU will provide. Some people need just some encouragement and technical assistance, and we will be providing that through our recent HOP Grant award from DECD. Other homeowners will need a little financial help to make building an ADU possible, and that's where the bond bank comes in. Municipalities can borrow funds and loan it to homeowners, or provide grants and pay off the loans with the added tax revenue over time, or build their own housing. Vermont's VHIP program created over 1,000 new units in 5 years by providing \$30-\$50,000 forgivable loans. We think that municipalities should be able to fund their own ADU and other housing programs at least until the state steps in with a statewide ADU incentive program. In the meantime, we are creating a service that will administer these programs for municipalities.

We encourage you to perfect and pass LD 1681.