

May 8, 2025

Testimony in Support

LD 1926, An Act to Require Increased Housing Density or Lower Minimum Lot Sizes for Workforce Housing

May 9, 2025, 1:00 p.m.

Housing and Economic Development Committee

Chair Curry, Chair Gere, and Honorable Members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee. My name is Donald Dostie, and I am a resident of Lewiston Maine. I am writing in support of LD 1926, “An Act to Require Increased Housing Density or Lower Minimum Lot Sizes for Workforce Housing.”

This bill, sponsored by Rep. Holly Stover, would accelerate Maine workforce housing creation by providing density bonuses for workforce housing units for sale or rent at between 80-220% of Area Median Income (AMI). Alternatively, the bill would permit a reduced minimum lot size. To set the appropriate bonus density, this proposal would create multiple AMI brackets with density higher density bonuses at the lower AMI scale and lower density bonuses at the higher AMI scale. A workforce housing creator could use a blended percentage if they seek to create units within multiple income brackets.

To take advantage of these bonuses, a housing creator would need to build at least 5 units of housing, at least 50% of which must be workforce affordable defined as affordable to individuals making between 80% and 220% of AMI. The housing creator would be required to place a restrictive covenant on the property to restrict those units as workforce affordable for 30 years. The landlord or seller would be responsible for income verification upon consideration of the transfer of property.

This legislation would enable the housing creator to choose the most efficient, and typically affordable, path for workforce housing creation. It would also encourage workforce housing development in rural areas with high minimum lot size requirements.

Municipalities like the City of Lewiston need to move quickly and overcome local entrenchment to make the changes necessary to create the housing we need today. In many cases individualized town/city policies on density do not encourage workforce affordable housing creation. A statewide density overlay will give developers, partnering with property owners like me, the predictability and incentive we need to generate workforce affordable housing in Maine.

My understanding is that the intent of this bill will provide a no-cost solution to the challenges of making finances work for workforce affordable housing construction. At a time when market forces, the high cost of land, workforce challenges, and pending tariffs are threatening the already precarious process of housing construction in Maine, the HED Committee can act to lower barriers to statewide workforce affordable housing. In my personal situation, I have available land within city limits at the end of a public way that I have been told is prime for “infill” development for



affordable rental units by planners. The property is centrally located next to Main Street Marketplace and there is a bus stop there. Rental units on my property would be perfect for those entering the workforce who can't afford to purchase their own home. The costs per square footage of constructing housing under current regulations would be prohibitive for an acre of land as I recently found out while meeting with planners.

Increasing the number of rental units using the proposed density formulae contained within LD 1926 would help enable construction of affordable units on my property and others like mine.

Thank you for your consideration,

Don Dostie, PLS
Professional Land Surveyor
d.dostie@encompassservices.co