



MAINE AFFORDABLE HOUSING COALITION

131st Legislature
Joint Select Committee on Housing

Testimony of Laura Mitchell, Executive Director of the Maine Affordable Housing Coalition on April 11, 2023
in opposition to LD 214 An Act to Amend the Laws Regarding Zoning and Land Use Restrictions to Limit Certain Requirements to Municipalities with a Population of More than 10,000

Good afternoon, Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and members of the Joint Select Committee on Housing. My name is Laura Mitchell, I serve as the Executive Director of the Maine Affordable Housing Coalition. The Maine Affordable Housing Coalition is a nonprofit membership organization of more than 140 Maine housing development, building, design, finance, shelter and service organizations. MAHC advocates for the creation and preservation of affordable housing so all Maine people have a home.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you all in opposition to LD214, An Act to Amend the Laws Regarding Zoning and Land Use Restrictions to Limit Certain Requirements to Municipalities with a Population of More than 10,000, sponsored by Rep. Campbell. Along with two other bills you are hearing today that delay and limit the bipartisan LD2003 that passed last legislative session – LD665 and LD1154.

We are in a crisis right now trying to house Maine people. Maine is short more than 20,000 units of affordable housing. LD2003 was a landmark, bipartisan effort to enable residential property owners to help address this crisis. It allows accessory dwelling units or duplexes on their single-family property. MAHC supports this entrepreneurial approach empowering all residential land owners to help meet the housing demand in Maine.

LD214, along with LD 665, and LD1154 seek to limit, delay or make optional the opportunity LD 2003 has to meaningfully improve housing and land owner income. All this, before LD2003 launches this July.

Maine people are suffering because of the lack of housing in our State. There's more than 1,000 people experiencing homelessness in every corner of our state, Maine ranks #2 in the nation with the lowest rental vacancy rate (<1% in urban areas), and rents have risen at alarming rates. Evictions have increased, seniors are unable to afford to keep up their homes and are living in unsafe conditions, and people making less than \$18-\$20/hour can't afford local market rents or home ownership.

LD214 limits LD2003 to only communities larger than 10,000 people. There are 483 municipalities in Maine. Only 22 cities, a mere 4%, are over 10,000 people. The lack of affordable housing impacts 100% or every single town and person in our state. From business owners trying to hire people to homeowners struggling to pay their bills, to people that are homeless. MAHC asks this committee to oppose LD214, LD665, and LD1154 so 100% of land owners in Maine have the right to build, rent or sell at least one additional unit of housing on their property based on their zone. LD214 and these other bills also roll back the potential opportunity that LD2003 provides for affordable housing density bonuses for multi-family development in areas towns have identified for this growth.

Support our state's economy, the rights of individual land owners, and the health and wellbeing of so many struggling for housing by opposing LD214, LD665 and LD1154 that limit and delay answers to our housing crisis. Thank you.