



**MAINE MUNICIPAL
ASSOCIATION SINCE 1936**

60 Community Drive | Augusta, ME 04330-9486

1-800-452-8786 (in state)

(T) 207-623-8428

(F) 207-624-0129

Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

In Opposition to

LD 659 – An Act to Reduce Housing Costs by Not Requiring Fire Sprinkler Systems for Single-family Homes and Duplexes

March 6, 2025

Sen. Curry, Rep. Gere and distinguished members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee, my name is Rebecca Graham, and I am submitting testimony in opposition to LD 659, at the direction of MMA's Legislative Policy Committee (LPC). Our LPC is composed of municipal officials from across Maine, elected by their peers to represent communities with vastly different enforcement staff, resources and capacities.

There is already an exemption for the use of sprinklers in single family residences and duplexes in the Maine Uniform Building Code, but some communities have adopted the requirement for sprinkler installation in multi-family dwellings, particularly those built to house an aged, vulnerable or disability sector for the single reason that no one has died in a fire in a sprinkled building. This is not a widely adopted approach because it is situational based on the built environment of a community and therefore not proportional to the perceived impact to the statewide housing market or an existing barrier to housing growth.

Sprinklers are not expensive protections. They are widely recognized as a very cheap option to save lives between the time a fire department is called to respond to and arrives on scene needing to assist evacuating multiple residents out safely and protect the life and property in adjacent buildings particularly when denser development is a policy approach the legislature is trying to encourage.

At no point should the small cost of life safety be a negotiable tactic to address the market forces pricing Maine residents out of attainable housing. It is the need for profit that is driving housing prices not the need for life safety protections inflating construction costs. Development professionals are not required to limit their project profit to provide a better living standard for future occupants, and municipalities should not be limited by their existing tools to protect the individuals who must live in these buildings once the project is completed.

Flexibility to balance public safety with proportional cost is needed especially when denser development is desired shrinking the distance between buildings to be more narrow than current fire apparatus can access. Cost should be weighed against optional internal finishes, but preempting locally adopted additional life safety should not be weighed against profit. For these reasons, officials ask you to respect home rule, the existing exemptions for sprinkler installation already in place in MUBEC, and the democratically adopted will of the voters in municipalities to accept additional ordinances around sprinkler installation.