

## **State of Maine Legislature – LD 1184 (HP 789) Public Hearing Comments from Justin Brown – 4/8/25**

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee, I want to thank you all for the opportunity to speak on this item. My name is Justin Brown, and I have been a Code Enforcement Officer for the Town of Falmouth for approximately 19 years.

I am submitting testimony today in opposition of LD 1184. Just for clarity, this testimony is my own and not necessarily the views of the Town of Falmouth.

While this proposal does not specifically state who from the municipality is to collect, format, and supply the required data, it is logical that the task will fall largely, or more likely entirely, to Code and Planning Offices. Like many Code Enforcement Officers around the state my job consists of tasks based on an ever-shifting set of priorities. I wear different hats including building inspector, shoreland zone officer, and local health officer among many others. There are many different tasks that fall within each of those categories. We often find our time and resources spread thin.

LD 1184 would add one additional task onto a mountain of required tasks. Falmouth collects data on dwelling units for many reasons but primarily for the goal of growth tracking. I created and managed the master list which tracks over 20 years of data for Falmouth. Beyond the countless hours in initially creating this list and keeping it updated; I have put in countless more performing tasks related to it. This consists of comparative analysis, nuanced explanations, and other time sensitive freedom of access requests. Frankly, it feels like the more work I put into it, the more work seems to be required to simply maintain it.

My primary concern with this proposal is the amount of additional workload that would be put on municipalities, and Code and Planning offices in particular, whose resources are often already stretched very thin. Even though Falmouth already tracks growth based on our own set criteria, the data this proposal asks for would require us to either greatly modify our existing approach or create a whole new and separate process to track these specific

requirements. Not only will apples to apples comparative data from municipality to municipality be difficult to collect and filter, but I also wonder what the ultimate goal of this data collection is and whether it is worth the effort given local home rule authority.

In summary, I am not generally opposed to thorough record keeping. My concern is with adding one more task amongst a growing number of tasks to already resource stretched departments, and I wonder about the benefit of mandated statewide data collection when municipalities have home rule authority. This mandate seems like an unnecessary distraction for municipalities whose resources are better spent in dealing with the housing situation at a local level.

Thank you for your time.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Justin Brown", written in a cursive style.

Justin Brown

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