



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002
(207) 287-1440
TTY: (207) 287-4469

Amanda N. Collamore

173 Library Street,
Pittsfield, ME 04967
Residence: (207) 679-7305
Amanda.Collamore@legislature.maine.gov

LD 2173: An Act to Update the Laws Regarding Housing Developments and Accessory Dwelling Units

Good Afternoon Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development. My name is Amanda Collamore, and I have the great pleasure of representing House District 68, Pittsfield, Clinton, Burnham, and Troy. I stand before you today to introduce LD 2173: An Act to Update the Laws Regarding Housing Developments and Accessory Dwelling Units.

This bill is about making sure the housing laws we passed last session work the way they were intended to work. LD 2173 does not change the policy direction set by this committee. Instead, it makes practical fixes to the law based on what towns, property owners, and professionals are experiencing now that those laws are being implemented.

Over the past year, communities across Maine have shared where the law has been unclear, where it has created unintended consequences, and where small fixes are needed to keep projects moving while maintaining safety and local planning. This bill reflects that feedback. Because these issues are already affecting housing development across the state, the Legislative Council approved LD 2173 as an emergency measure. A significant portion of this bill focuses on making important corrections and clarifications to LD 1829, passed last session. For example, it places a clear cap of 55 feet on the affordable housing height bonus and ensures that these developments are reviewed by fire officials. This keeps safety at the center of the process while still allowing needed housing to move forward.

The bill also standardizes subsurface wastewater requirements for accessory dwelling units, affordable housing, and small multifamily housing statewide. This consistency matters. Property owners and municipalities should not face different rules depending on where they live when the goal is the same kind of housing.

LD 2173 also corrects errors and adds clarity to the core of last session's law that limits a municipality's ability to block small-scale development on private property. These provisions were designed to protect the rights of property owners to contribute to Maine's housing supply, and this bill ensures that intent is clearly reflected in the law.



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At the same time, the bill recognizes the very real impacts of rapid growth. It provides towns with a circuit breaker to manage those impacts, while keeping limits on the use of growth caps in designated growth areas. It also exempts affordable housing from local growth permit requirements so that the projects needed are not delayed by processes that were never intended to apply to them.

Finally, LD 2173 cleans up technical errors and clarifies language from the enactment of LD 1829, ensuring the statute reads as was intended and is clear for all.

As we talk about housing, it is important to be honest about the role of funding. There will never be enough public dollars to subsidize the full amount of housing Maine needs to meet its goals. Most of our housing must be created without subsidy. That means we need laws that allow housing to be built in practical, small-scale ways. These changes rebalance how housing gets built in Maine. They support accessory dwelling units, duplexes, and small multifamily homes, and they recognize that individual property owners who want to build on their own land are a major part of the solution. For me, this bill is fundamentally about property owner rights. It respects the ability of people to responsibly use their own property to create housing, while still honoring safety standards and reasonable local planning.

LD 2173 keeps the intent of last session's housing laws intact and makes sure they work in the real world. I respectfully ask the committee to support this bill.

I am happy to answer any questions. That said, there are content experts testifying after me who may be better suited to answer more technical questions.

Thank you for your time.