



Town of South Berwick

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February 11, 2026

Senator Curry, Representative Gere and distinguished members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee, my name is Paul Schumacher, and I am a member of the South Berwick Town Council.

I write to you on behalf of the South Berwick Town Council who voted unanimously to ask that LD 2173 include an extension for those towns with Council forms of government.

The South Berwick Town Council supports the efforts of your Committee to expand access to housing not only in our region and the state as a whole. As we speak we are attempting to conduct a thoughtful dialogue with our residents on what the density implications of LD 1829 might mean for our community and how we can maintain the character of a community which is rich in history, and culture with a small but growing village center and wonderful natural areas that provide outdoor recreation, wildlife habitat and natural resource-dependent industries.

We find the time frame of completing this by July 1, 2026 a nearly impossible ask – unless we wish to quickly (and we would say rashly) put together the numerous Comprehensive Plan, zoning and subdivision changes that would imperil what we have created through thoughtful planning over the last 30-40 years.

Although we are a Council form of government we are not a large town. We have one planner who is also our Economic Development Director. The request for an extension (to at least 1/1/27) is supported by a number of factors:

- The rule making was just completed last month and contains about 20 pages of guidance for review and understanding.
- LD 2173 will add changes to the existing law. These proposed changes will need to be incorporated into any new local legislation. They have not been approved at this time.
- State funding to assist will not be available until April and time cannot be retroactively charged to the grant funds. We would likely need to have a draft set of ordinance changes ready about mid to late April to meet public notice and hearing deadlines.

Finally, we would also say we adopted an updated Comprehensive Plan in November of 2024. We now will need to make changes to that plan (along with any zoning changes) to better prepare for the impacts to our growth areas from the legislation.

All these issues call out the need for an extension for those trying to meet a 7/1/26 deadline. On a more personal note I have been a planner in Maine for over 35 years. I was the Director of the Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission (SMPDC) for 25 years. An aspect of LD 1829 that concerns me is the allowance for numerous avenues for growth outside of growth areas. I am not clear whether this is intended or not, but in a community that has spent decades conserving rural areas (such as Mt. Agamenticus) and creating a balanced community as far as growth and conservation, this is a concern and I believe threatens that balance. We hope this can be looked at as well. I believe this concern also applies to other communities in this region.

We support the intent of this legislation and the broader housing reforms advanced through **LD 1829**. Maine needs more housing, and South Berwick understands its role in helping meet that need. An extension of the current deadline would help us create a more well planned future.

Thank you for your time, consideration and hard work.

Paul Schumacher for South Berwick Town Council

Cc: Senator Mark Lawrence
Rep. Michele Meyer
Rep. Tiffany Roberts
Decarlo Brown, South Berwick Planning Director
South Berwick Town Council