

Testimony of Patrick Woodcock
Before the Joint Standing Committees on Housing and Economic Development
In Support of L.D. 2173
“An Act to Update the Laws Regarding Housing Developments and Accessory Dwelling Units”

February 10, 2026

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and members of Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development, my name is Patrick Woodcock. I am here on behalf of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, representing a network of 5,000+ small to large businesses. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on L.D. 2173, “An Act to Update the Laws Regarding Housing Developments and Accessory Dwelling Units.” I want to thank Representative Collamore and Speaker Fecteau for bringing this legislation forward in a collaborative manner and maintaining the core components of LD 1829, which the Chamber supported last year.

Let us be clear that our housing situation is leaving an entire generation of Mainers behind, making it challenging for households to grow a family here in Maine, and fundamentally threatening our economy. There is virtually 0% employment growth projected from now until 2029. However, we have had thousands of housing projects rejected by voters or municipalities that would have provided a life here in Maine for thousands of Mainers and added critical supply to address the growth of demand for housing here in the state.

It should be noted that LD 1829 placed some important limitations on restrictions on housing development that enables additional density and importantly raised the threshold of review for subdivision review. These were directionally critical, expanding density and reducing regulatory barriers. In addition, the legislation placed a modest restriction on sprinkler requirements for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) will improve the economics for this relatively new market segment.

We appreciate that the legislation does not undermine the core purpose of LD 1829, but addresses some of the concerns raised by some municipalities. We would encourage its adoption and work on additional bills this session to lower the regulatory costs of housing development and promote innovative housing production.

As you move to the work session we would encourage further changes to ensure that the changes embedded in LD 2173 do not unnecessarily put roadblocks up to housing development. Specifically, the current language regarding fire inspection of additional height accommodation may create a roadblock where a town is fully supportive of the project. Specifically, we would recommend the following language:

“To be eligible for an additional height allowance pursuant to this subsection, an affordable housing development ~~must~~ may be reviewed by a fire official or designee during the development as part of the approval process...”