

Benjamin Harris
Dayton
LD 659

Testimony in Opposition of LD 659

An Act to Reduce Housing Costs by Not Requiring Fire Sprinkler Systems for Single Family Homes and Duplexes

Senator Curry, Representative Gere and distinguished members of The Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development,

My name is Ben Harris, I am a resident of the town of Dayton where I serve as the volunteer deputy fire chief of my local fire department. I urge you to vote ought not to pass on LD 659 for several reasons.

First, this bill removes local control for municipalities to make decisions that they feel is best for their own community. Maine is a home rule state and I am concerned that enacting this bill goes against one of Maine's pillars of governance.

Secondly, as I am sure others have testified, the building code that Maine has adopted included the use of several highly flammable building materials, as well as sprinklers for residential dwellings. The legislature, however, removed the requirement for sprinklers, leaving building materials that create a deadly flashover in just 3-5 minutes from the time of first ignition.

According to the US Fire Administration from 2013-2024:

There has been a 6% decrease in fires

There has been a 5% increase in fire deaths in residential structures

Over 60% of these deaths can be directly attributed to fire patterns related to building materials or items inside buildings

30.7% of fire victims were attempting to escape the fire before their death

I believe had sprinklers been in place, then a vast majority of these deaths would have been prevented. This same organization reports that sprinkler systems reduce the chance of death by 89%. In fact, I am not familiar with a single fire death in a home with a sprinkler in Maine.

I could go on about the benefits of sprinklers; however, I believe the point of this legislation is to remove the rights of municipalities to decide the value of sprinklers for themselves. I urge this committee to please vote ought not to pass on LD 659.

Respectfully submitted,

Ben Harris

Dayton