

Cumberland – Oxford Counties Fire Chiefs Association

6 Perreault Lane Bridgton, Maine 04009

President Tommie C. McKenzie

Secretary/Treasurer Todd Perreault

March 5, 2025

Testimony **Against** “An Act to Reduce Housing Costs by Not Requiring Fire Sprinkler System for Single-family Homes and Duplexes” LD 659

To the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development

From Tommie C. McKenzie, Lovell, Maine

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and distinguished members of the Committee:

My name is Tommie C. McKenzie, and I have the honor of serving the Maine Fire Service Community as President of the Cumberland/Oxford Counties Fire Chiefs’ Association, the past President of the Western Maine Firefighters Association, as the Chief Fire Officer for several communities for more than twenty-five years, and as a firefighter serving my community.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in staunch opposition of this legislation, “An Act to Reduce Housing Costs by Not Requiring Fire Sprinkler System for Single-family Homes and Duplexes.” This is extremely critical to the safety of the State’s Firefighters and our Citizens.

My background includes the fire service, EMS, and Law Enforcement, through different uniforms they all have a critical element in common and that is Public Safety. This Act, to not require sprinklers in homes is one of the most dangerous proposals to live safely in recent years. The control of fire incidents and mitigating life-threatening emergencies in today’s homes is a critical mission of a sprinkler system.

This brings me to speak of our Life Safety Codes, to put it bluntly they obsolete and outdated. The State follows a version of the code of 2018 years ago which now fully compromises life safety here in the State of Maine. In today’s homes the fire load is enormous with the vast number of synthetics that fill our homes. The potential threat is compounded by the response time of a fire department. The materials filling our homes burn faster and hotter than ever before increase the danger to the occupants as escape times decreased. The bottom line here is that we, the responding fire department, just cannot get to a home to suppress the blaze before it consumes the entire home, threatens the lives of the occupants, and causes devastating property damage.

This is where a home sprinkler system would shine, a sprinkler system would start to work earlier in the beginning stages of a fire and work to keep the blaze in check till fire suppression units could arrive and completely extinguish the fire. The sprinkler would save the lives of the occupants by activating which then would provide additional time to escape. The sprinkler by checking the fire within would also greatly help reduce property loss. Beyond any doubt sprinkler systems save lives and reduce property loss.

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Modern Building Codes are essential for life safety and property conservation, reflecting today's technological advances.

I fully support home sprinkler systems; it is long overdue especially here in rural Maine.

Thank you for your time and consideration. For the sake of life safety, it is my recommendation that legislation LD 659 be rejected.

Sincerely,

Tommie McKenzie

Tommie C. McKenzie,
President COFCA
Assistant Fire Chief / EMA Director
Sweden Fire Department
Sweden, Maine
603-447-9176 cell
asstfirechief@swedenmaine.org

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Lovell
LD 659

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