

Cumberland County Fire Chiefs' Association



Stephen Sloan , President
Tel: (207) 854-0644
ssloan@westbrook.me.us

Brent Libby, Vice President
Tel: (207) 892-1911
bjlibby@windhammaine.us

Andy Turcotte , Secretary/Treasurer
Tel: (207) 829-5421
aturcotte@cumberlandmaine.com

March 3, 2025

To: Housing and Economic Development Committee

RE: An Act to Reduce Housing Costs by Not Requiring Fire Sprinkler Systems for Single-family Homes and Duplexes

As the Fire Chiefs of Cumberland County, we are committed to protecting lives and property, we vehemently oppose Maine **LD 659, HP0427**. This reckless bill strips municipalities of their ability to enforce fire sprinkler requirements in single-family homes and duplexes, putting countless lives at unnecessary risk. Fire safety is not negotiable, and local governments must retain the power to implement lifesaving measures that fit their community. This bill prioritizes short-term cost savings for developers over the safety of Maine's residents, and that is unacceptable.

Fires double in size every 30 seconds, leaving minimal time for escape. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), homes equipped with sprinkler systems reduce the risk of fire-related death by an astounding 81%. That statistic alone should end any debate over the necessity of sprinklers.

As those who have responded to countless fires, we know the grim reality of home fires without sprinkler systems. Without immediate suppression, fires rapidly engulf homes, trapping residents inside and making rescue efforts perilous for firefighters. Sprinklers contain fires at their source, drastically increasing survival chances and minimizing destruction. By blocking municipalities from mandating this proven technology, this bill endangers every homeowner, tenant, and firefighter in Maine.

The cost argument against sprinklers is misleading and shortsighted. The average cost to install a fire sprinkler system in a new home is roughly \$4,000-\$6,000—a fraction of the price homeowners pay to rebuild after a fire. Moreover, insurance discounts often offset installation costs over time, making sprinklers an investment that pays off financially while safeguarding lives.

The financial devastation caused by home fires far exceeds the modest expense of installing sprinklers. Families lose everything, homes, belongings, and, tragically, loved ones. Fire departments and local governments bear the burden of increased emergency response costs, while communities suffer irreplaceable losses. Investing in fire sprinklers prevents this destruction and is the fiscally responsible course of action.

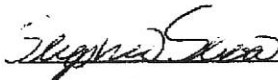

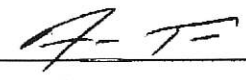
Denying municipalities the ability to enforce fire codes weakens the effectiveness of fire prevention measures statewide. The National Fire Protection Agency Standards (NFPA) and the Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code (MUBEC) exist to set high safety standards, not to be diluted in favor of corporate interests. Fire protection is not an area where corners can be cut without dire consequences.

Maine **LD 659, HP0427** is a dangerous and irresponsible piece of legislation. It ignores decades of fire safety advancements, disregards the expertise of fire professionals, and prioritizes cost-

cutting over human lives. As fire chiefs, we have seen too many tragedies that could have been prevented with proper fire suppression systems. We will not stand by while lawmakers strip away vital protections and put Maine residents in harm's way.

We demand that policymakers reject this bill and instead champion fire prevention initiatives that prioritize safety over profit. Every home built without a sprinkler system is a home at greater risk of tragedy. We have a duty to protect our communities, and that means standing firmly against this bill.

Sincerely,

		
Stephen Sloan	Brent Libby	Andrew Turcotte
President	Vice President	Secretary & Treasure