



Testimony in Support 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 the distinguished members of the Committee On Housing and Economic Development, my name is Harris Van Pate and I serve as policy analyst for Maine Policy Institute. Maine Policy is a free market think tank, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that advocates for individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of LD 659, "An Act to Reduce Housing Costs by Not Requiring Fire Sprinkler Systems for Single-family Homes and Duplexes."

Reducing Unnecessary Regulatory Burdens

LD 659 represents a crucial step in addressing Maine’s housing affordability crisis by eliminating fire sprinkler mandates for single-family homes and duplexes. While fire safety is a critical concern, imposing blanket mandates for sprinkler systems increases construction costs, pricing Mainers out of homeownership. Housing costs in Maine have already surged due to supply shortages and excessive regulatory burdens, and additional mandates exacerbate these issues.¹

The Cost Impact of Sprinkler Mandates

Installing a fire sprinkler system can add thousands of dollars to the cost of a home. According to the National Fire Sprinkler Association, installation can cost around 1% of a home’s construction cost, which can cost between \$280,000 and \$430,000 in Maine in 2025.^{2 3} Therefore, installing a sprinkler system may cost between \$2,800 and \$4,300, not including upkeep and maintenance costs. These expenses disproportionately impact low- and middle-income homebuyers, further limiting their ability to purchase a home.

Alternative Fire Safety Measures

Maine has robust fire safety regulations that ensure homes are built to high safety standards, including smoke alarms, fire-resistant building materials, and escape

¹ <https://www.pressherald.com/2025/02/21/maine-home-prices-rose-in-january-and-so-did-sales/>

²

<https://nfsa.org/2020/09/15/the-true-cost-to-install-a-residential-sprinkler-system/#:~:text=The%20average%20expense%20to%20install,cup%20of%20coffee%20per%20week.>

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<https://www.houzeo.com/blog/how-much-does-it-cost-to-build-a-house-maine/#:~:text=What%20does%20it%20cost%20to,expenses%2C%20material%20costs%2C%20etc.>



planning.⁴ Empowering homeowners to make their own fire safety decisions, rather than imposing one-size-fits-all mandates, respects individual property rights while maintaining safety and alleviating cost issues that price some Mainers out of the housing market.

Additionally, jurisdictions that have adopted mandatory sprinkler requirements have seen slight measurable improvement in fire safety outcomes, and new construction materials appear to do a better job at reducing fire risks than fire sprinkler mandates.^{5 6} Homeowners can make informed choices about additional safety measures based on their needs, financial capabilities, and personal risk assessments.

Promoting Housing Affordability and Economic Growth

Removing unnecessary regulations like mandatory fire sprinkler requirements directly supports economic growth by reducing the cost of housing construction. Lower home prices encourage more homebuilding, increase homeownership rates, and allow younger families and first-time buyers to enter the market.⁷

By passing LD 659, the Maine Legislature can help alleviate housing affordability concerns while ensuring a fair and balanced approach to fire safety.

Conclusion

For these reasons, we strongly urge the Committee to support LD 659 and remove this costly and unnecessary burden on homebuilders and buyers. Mainers deserve affordable housing options without excessive government-mandated expenses. Thank you for your time and consideration.

⁴ <https://www.maine.gov/dps/fmo/fire-service-laws/rules>

⁵ <https://nypost.com/2025/02/19/us-news/proposed-sprinkler-rule-will-drive-up-home-prices-in-ny-builders/>

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<https://www.nahb.org/-/media/NAHB/advocacy/docs/top-priorities/codes/fire-sprinklers/compiled-fire-sprinkler-responses.pdf?hash=A2A88F20469C5A48F7260DC19826DAF7&rev=32c9f66ccb114f0288db84f5a4b44978>

⁷ <https://www.ncsl.org/human-services/increasing-the-housing-supply-by-reducing-costs-and-barriers>