



MAINE AFFORDABLE HOUSING COALITION

Joint Standing Committee on Housing & Economic Development

*Testimony of Laura Mitchell, Executive Director, Maine Affordable Housing Coalition, 4.25.25
in favor of LD1247 - An Act to Restrict Municipal Ordinance Requirements Regarding Housing
Developments*

Sponsored by Rep. Gere

Hello, Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development. I am Laura Mitchell, executive director of the **Maine Affordable Housing Coalition**. I am testifying in favor of LD1396 on behalf of the coalition, **a nonprofit with 140 member businesses and more than 600 individual members**.

This bill tackles a very real and avoidable barrier to building more housing in Maine: overly restrictive local zoning rules that don't reflect today's needs—or today's housing supply and affordability crisis.

Here's the reality: we need to build about **80,000 homes by 2030** just to keep up with demand. But right now, we're producing less than half of what we need each year—and too often, even well-located projects get blocked by local ordinances. The 2023 Maine Statewide Housing Needs Study identified restrictive zoning in growth areas as one of the biggest barriers to meeting our housing needs.

According to the Greater Portland Council of Governments, many towns in southern Maine—including Yarmouth and others—still require large lot sizes, even where public water and sewer are already available. In some communities in central Maine, a vast majority of homes in desirable residential neighborhoods could no longer get built due to set back, frontage and lot size requirements. So now they are non-conforming lots. These requirements drive up land costs and block the kinds of housing we say we want more of, like starter homes and missing middle housing.

These zoning rules might have made sense decades ago when lots of starter homes were on the market. But today, these rules are driving up land costs, reducing density, and preventing the kinds of smaller, more affordable homes that young families, seniors, and middle-income workers need.

LD 1247 is smart—it doesn't eliminate local control. It says: if an area already has water and sewer and is zoned for housing, let's not require oversized lots, excessive setbacks, or more parking than people actually use. Let's use the infrastructure we've already invested in.

This bill still preserves shoreland protections, private covenants, subdivision oversight, and septic safety standards. It's not a free-for-all. It's a targeted fix to a very real problem.

We need to act. We're seeing teachers, nurses, and restaurant workers commuting an hour or more because they can't afford to live in the towns where they work. That's not sustainable—and it's not who we are as a state.

LD 1247 helps get homes built where people want to live, where infrastructure exists, and where communities have planned for growth. It's a housing bill, yes—but it's also a climate bill, a workforce bill, and a common-sense bill.

This is about being efficient with the infrastructure we already have. Please support LD 1247. This is smart, fair, and necessary policy to help address housing affordability in Maine, and keep our municipalities thriving with the infrastructure they have in place, rather than expanding it and driving up property taxes for future generations.