

April 29, 2025

Committee Chairs and Committee Members

My name is Liz Trice, I've lived most of my life in Maine, and have a masters' degree from the Muskie School in Public Policy and Community Development. Most of my work is thinking about how to build housing affordably in existing towns and neighborhoods to increase vibrancy and walkability, while protecting our prized natural places including forest, farms, and coastline.



I currently work for Backyard ADUs in Brunswick, ME, which designs and builds high-quality Zero Energy Ready Homes/Apartments and Accessory Dwelling Units in backyards and on standalone land. Backyard combines personalized design, modular construction, and on-site finishing to create high efficiency homes quickly and less expensively than most new homes. Last year we built over 25 Accessory Dwelling Units, and we will build over 70 dwelling units in the coming year. Our typical small home is a well designed, spacious 800 sf two bedroom home that costs very little to heat or maintain. We invite you to look at our website backyardadus.com or visit our model home in Brunswick.

We believe that ADUs are an important part of solving Maine's housing crisis and reinvigorating small towns and villages because they consume less land and are less expensive, less controversial, and quicker to build than most other types of housing. Our homes are allowing seniors to downsize and boost their income, allowing aging parents to join their children, and homeowners to earn honest rental income.

We are in strong support of the intention of LD 1272, and think it needs a few edits to be easily understood and implemented.

My understanding is that LD1272 has three major intentions, all of which we support:

1. Sprinklers: Maine should follow New Hampshire's example and extend the sprinkler prohibition to all low risk newly constructed building types; single family, two family and town house buildings.

Research has shown that almost all fatal fires in Maine in the last 20 years have been in homes built before 1980 - before smoke detectors were common. When you focus on newly constructed, all-electric, super tight homes, the chances of a fatal fire are very low. Sprinklers can easily add \$18k per unit and cause other issues such as maintenance, accidental damage, and water line upgrades, which together with other building barriers can result in an ADU not getting built. The impact of housing insecurity on mental health is far greater than the likelihood of being physically injured in a house fire in a newly constructed home. Even if the intention is to just exempt ADUs, the language should be clarified to say specifically that adding a 3rd or 4th unit to an existing building would be exempt.

2. Density: the intention is to allow 4 units on all lots served by sewer and/or within growth boundary, and two units allowed on all lots not served by sewer and/or within growth boundary. We

also support this intention. To enact this intention, it's essential to say that the municipalities cannot dictate the density, or lot area per unit, for those first 4 (or 2) units. One way to do this would be to say "municipal ordinance may establish requirements for a lot area per dwelling unit for more than 4 (or 2) dwelling units per lot, as long as the required lot area for subsequent units on a lot is not greater than the required lot area for the first unit. "

3. Separate ownership: We support the intention of allowing separate ownership of ADUs. As Maine's population grows, ADUs provide a great opportunity for home ownership opportunities, and ADUs are likely to be naturally affordable due to their size and shared lot.

ADUs developed and sold as condos make up 10-20% of ADU development in various West Coast cities and are an important part of the ADU development mix.

We think ADUs and smaller homes generally can help alleviate the housing crisis in Maine, but we need to reduce unnecessary requirements like sprinklers.

I encourage you to perfect and pass LD 1272.

Liz Trice

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Liz Trice".

Director of Policy & Partnerships

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