



131st Legislature
Joint Select Committee on Housing
Testimony of Laura Mitchell, Executive Director of the Maine Affordable Housing Coalition
January 5, 2024
In favor of LD 1672- An Act to Establish an Affordable Housing Permitting Process
- sponsored by Representative Gere

Good afternoon, Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and esteemed members of the Joint Select Committee on Housing, my name is Laura Mitchell, I serve as the Executive Director of the Maine Affordable Housing Coalition.

The Maine Affordable Housing Coalition (MAHC) is a nonprofit membership organization of more than 140 Maine housing development, architecture, construction, design, engineering, shelter, and housing services organizations. We work to solve Maine's housing crisis by advocating for the creation and preservation of housing for all people in Maine.

MAHC is sharing this testimony today in favor of LD 1672, An Act to Establish an Affordable Housing Permitting Process sponsored by Representative Gere.

This bill establishes the Affordable Housing Development Review Board under the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry's Bureau of Resource Information and Land Use Planning in order to issue permits for the development of affordable housing and workforce housing.

The concept of a state level affordable housing review and permitting process came from the legislature's housing commission recommendations that led to LD2003. MAHC is in full support of this.

MAHC does suggest some amendments to this bill language.

The first is regarding the type of housing built. The language is highly prescriptive. The cost of building is so high that these types of prescriptive standards could make projects uneconomic and potentially unfeasible to build. Revising the prescriptive language or adding, "*unless the developer can demonstrate that meeting all these standards would render the development uneconomic*" is suggested. This is the approach Massachusetts has taken.

The second is regarding the make up of the board. MAHC suggests this board closely reflects that of New Hampshire's review board, which is made up of three neutral positions to ensure fair and impartial review of projects.

As you know, Maine is in a housing crisis and demand outstrips supply. This imbalance is only predicted to increase. Building new affordable housing, quickly and efficiently, is vital. LD1672 takes a step in ensuring the expedited and efficient review of projects to bring housing to Maine people quickly, with appropriate levels of review and consideration of local needs.

Thank you.

Laura Mitchell
Maine Affordable Housing Coalition
LD 1672

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