

Valli Geiger
Representative
District 83: Rockland & Owls Head
April 25, 2021

LD 1312:



An Act To Remove Barriers to Accessory Dwelling Units

Good Morning Senate Chair Hickman and House Chair Sylvester and honorable members of the Labor and Housing Committee. My name is Valli Geiger, I am Representative for District

Small but meeting all building code, health & safety and design requirements. Beautiful housing for one



93, Rockland and Owls Head and the Sponsor of LD 1312, An Act to Remove Barriers to Accessory Dwelling Units and Allow Accessory Dwelling Units Where Single Family Houses are Allowed.

As this committee is well aware, most of Maine has an acute housing shortage. The median price of a home in Maine has increased 55% in the last decade due to short supply and high demand. In the last 5 years, the majority of Maine households have become unable to afford the median home sales price. Over the last 20 years, the majority of Maine households are unable to afford the median price for a 2 bedroom apartment. 30,000 Mainers are on waiting lists to gain access to an affordable housing unit in the state. 250 new affordable units are created each year, 1,000 a year are needed. 15 out of 16 counties have an affordable housing crisis. In midcoast Maine the need is particularly great.

The Midcoast Regional Planning Commission at a Midcoast Chamber of Commerce meeting this past fall, stated the biggest barrier to workforce recruitment was lack of housing.

Maine is not alone, California, Florida, New Hampshire, Oregon, Vermont and Rhode Island, in response to the acute shortage of affordable housing, allow an ADU on a single family house lot.

Allowing ADU's will enable Maine to increase the number of housing units without using public money. Allowing one ADU on a single family lot, increases its value, returns sovereignty to a home owner, allows those on a fixed income to have a source of additional income to cover their property taxes, while providing additional housing in their community. It allows families to keep aging loved ones, adult disabled children near yet with independence. 41% of Mainers over 60 live alone. ADU's allows aging seniors to move to smaller spaces, freeing up square footage for larger households.

Will a broad ADU statute alone, fix the housing shortage? No. In housing like in other complex problems we enter the rule of 3%. In medicine, when treating hypertension we find one medication decreases blood pressure by 3%, the lowering of salt, another 3%, walking daily, another 3%, decreasing alcohol intake, another 3%, increasing intake of fruits and vegetables another 3% etc. Each small effort creates a small effect, but many efforts creates a large effect. So too with housing solutions.

We are facing a perfect storm:

- Sudden sharp increases in house valuations accompanied by a legislative disinclination to return 5% of municipal revenue sharing back to towns and cities and a refusal to fund all school districts at 55% of education costs, means an increasing burden falls to residential property tax payers.
- The designation of Maine as the oldest state in the nation is accompanied by a higher death rate than birth rate, necessitating that Maine look to bringing people to Maine from other places.
- An acute shortage of workers in most fields is made more acute by the inability to find workforce/affordable housing. Maine Health estimates 50% of the new nurses recruited to the Midcoast, over the last few years did not stay due to an inability to find affordable housing.

References:

US Census Bureau

NCSL ADU Report

Maine Housing Caucus Housing Joint Resolution

Pew Research

<https://www.jtgfoundation.org/resource/maine-data-glimpse-share-of-householders-age-60-living-alone>

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/242284/percentage-of-single-person-households-in-the-us-by-state/>

<https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/livable-communities/livable-documents/documents-2019/ADU-guide-web-singles-071619.pdf>