



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Senator Daughtry, Representative Sylvester, and members of the Labor & Housing Committee,

My name is John Andrews and I represent District 73 in western Maine. I am here today to testify against LD 2003, "An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Increase Housing Opportunities in Maine by Studying Zoning and Land Use Restrictions".

We find ourselves with yet another bill designed to take away power from individual communities and consolidate it with bureaucrats at the state level. There are many reasons why this bill should not pass out of the Labor and Housing Committee. The largest of those is that this bill seeks to usurp local control and local autonomy. LD 2003 takes that long-standing liberty and gives it to the un-elected central planners of the state.

The late Walter E. Williams was a noted economist and observer of historical events. At a symposium at Villanova University, he once spoke of such central planners in all levels of government who seek to run our lives remarking that,

"They believe that they have more intelligence and superior wisdom to the masses. They believe that they have been ordained to forcibly impose that wisdom on the rest of us."

That's what's going on with this bill at its core. It's about Maine's power elite using the force of government to determine outcomes decided by the privileged few. That's the underlying theme of LD 2003. The bill aims to take away the self-determination of local communities. It imposes fixes that are top down and one size fits all. What's good for South Portland is not always good for South Paris. Taking away local control and leadership by locally elected citizens is a radical idea and antithetical to everything that makes Maine so unique in her local control character and ethos.

Our benevolent masters in the top levels of the Executive and Legislative branches are emboldened by their afore-mentioned 'ordained wisdom'. They feel that they know better than every locally elected Selectman and Town Councilor in our state.

A *Politburo* named the 'Municipal Housing Development Permit Review Board' is created in this bill. This 'Review Board' would be made up of appointees determined by the Governor, Speaker of the House and Senate President. These three individuals would have the power to control your local community through their appointees to this 'Review Board'. These proxy appointees will most certainly be able to overturn local decisions that their appointers don't like.

This is a 'heads I win, tails you lose' coin flip for the central planners as they take over our long-standing home rule. They want to consolidate power and jurisdiction from our towns and communities. The idea that this 'Review Board' will empower political appointees to overturn the decisions of local leaders on the local level is an outrageous proposition.

This is just one aspect of this very large bill that would holistically change our state forever. These decisions should not be made lightly or over Zoom. The public has not been allowed to attend public hearings in person for the last two years. This is still the case even though mask mandates have ended within the House Chamber of the State House. I have to believe that ramming through huge policy shifts like this, over Zoom, is why the restriction has not yet been lifted for public hearings to be attended in person. If the people making these decisions had to look the public in the eye, they might not be so quick to take away all of their power, leaving them defenseless to the encroaching tide of Progressivism that will destroy the towns they love.

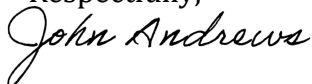
In closing, I've heard the term 'private property' invoked in defense of this bill. Private property is the cornerstone of western civilization. Any rational actor would agree on that. Centralizing power into the bureaucracy of the state to empower our most powerful politicians and their appointed proxies to rule over our towns is the last thing that we need in the state of Maine. Citing 'private property' as the reason for this bill is not an accurate portrayal of what is really going on with this piece of legislation.

This bill is about power and the consolidation of power into the State.

Towns and communities are made up of individual citizens, many of whom own private property, who agree on a social compact to live together as a community. They consent to a form of local government and to elect local leaders to run that local government. Towns run on the quintessential New England style town meeting and on local votes by Select and Planning Boards in-between town meetings every year. This bill takes a bulldozer to that structure of community, connectedness and self-determination. It is antithetical to everything that makes us Mainers and proud New Englanders. That is why this bill must be voted down in Committee.

You must vote 'Ought not to Pass' on this destructive, top down, bulldozer of a bill.

Respectfully,



John Andrews
State Representative