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As a member of the Town of Bridgton, Maine, Planning Board, while I recognize we have a housing crisis, I am appalled at the disregard for home rule and the many years of effort that Bridgton and other rural Towns have put into developing and implementing their Comprehensive plans and Zoning ordinances. Bridgton spent 5 years translating the vision and goals of our Comprehensive Plan into a zoning ordinance that struck the right balance between commercial development, protecting private property rights, and preserving the character of our rural New England Town and its natural resources. These are critical to a healthy, vibrant rural Maine Town. The provisions of the Affordable Housing Commission Bill erodes the local decision-making authority with a one-size-fits-all approach, and the speed with which these recommendations would be implemented, without study of the impacts on municipal infrastructure, resident relations, or natural resources may be destructive to the well being of small Towns like Bridgton and others in the Lakes Region. For example, allowing a density 2.5 times the most restrictive density in Bridgton could result in 4-story apartment buildings on a 2000 square foot lot! This represents the density requirement of a city such as Portland but not a rural Town such as Bridgton.

No two municipalities are alike. Absent in this version of the bill is support for the local ingenuity necessary to ensure that plans can be implemented in each community. Local control can be respected while simultaneously honoring the commitment to increasing levels of affordable housing in all communities.

Far more study is needed to understand the many impacts of such legislation and to yield a more equitable bill with flexibility for proper implementation in our various communities.