

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO LD2003 – An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Increase Housing Opportunities in Maine by Studying Zoning and Land Use Restrictions

Senator Daughtry, Representative Sylvester and members of the Labor and Housing Committee, my name is Denny Gallaudet. I live in Cumberland, ME and am Chair of the Town of Cumberland Sustainability Subcommittee.

I have read the Commission's Report dated December 2021 and find it replete with misstatements of fact and unsupported assertions (in quotes).

1. Maine is NOT "facing an affordable housing crisis." Housing is affordable if housing costs are not more than 30% of median household income. Currently, this ratio is 25%¹ for the State of Maine. None of Maine's 16 counties exceed 30%. The closest at 28% are Cumberland and York counties – our two wealthiest counties. LD2003 is all about the two Maines – and not in a good way.
2. NOT "everyone should have the right to safe, affordable housing." While to be hoped for, affordable housing for at least the median income household, it is not a right. If it were, it would be so stated in the Maine Constitution.
3. NOT "prohibited by the Constitution . . . is municipal home rule authority." Local zoning ordinances fall under home rule and are the province of local planning boards. Such boards are much closer to the needs and desires of the People than, with respect, the Legislative Commission to Increase Housing Opportunities in Maine by Studying Zoning and Land Use Restrictions.

I do not deny that housing prices in Maine and elsewhere have increased rapidly in recent months. These are due primarily in my view to the demand distortions of the pandemic and to the excess stimulus of the Federal Government and the egregious free money policies of the Federal Reserve. Both excesses are now going into reverse to check inflation. It seems highly likely that house prices will also go into reverse in the coming months and perhaps years. Local zoning ordinances have and will have little impact on these larger macro-economic forces.

In summary, I strongly oppose this bill and ask this committee to vote LD2003 Ought Not to Pass.

¹ From US Census Quickfacts, Maine 2015-2019 median household income \$57,918, home value \$190,400, non-mortgage monthly owner costs \$499, 30-year home mortgage rate 3.76% with 20% down payment.