



March 7, 2022

Dear Senator Daughtry, Representative Sylvester, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing:

Founded in 1964, Greater Portland Landmarks' mission is to preserve and revitalize greater Portland's remarkable legacy of historic buildings, neighborhoods, landscapes and parks. Our goal is to save greater Portland's historic places through preservation and adaptive reuse while promoting creative new architecture that enhances historic neighborhoods.

Maine Preservation, founded in 1972, is dedicated to promoting and preserving historic places, buildings, downtowns and neighborhoods, and strengthening the cultural and economic vitality of Maine communities.

We are providing testimony to raise a concern regarding **LD 2003: An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Commission To Increase Housing Opportunities in Maine by Studying Zoning and Land Use Restrictions.**

**Sec. 3. 5 MRSA §4581-A, sub-§5** is enacted to read:

**5. Housing development.** For any municipality or government entity to restrict the construction or development of housing accommodations in any area based upon criteria that refers to the character of a location, the overcrowding of land or the undue concentration of the population. For the purposes of this subsection, the following terms have the following meanings.

A. "Character of a location" means the unique characteristics of a municipality or specific area within a municipality or other political subdivision.

While we applaud this bill's great strides towards fair housing, the lack of specificity in this language may have unintended consequences that will negatively impact Maine's historic downtowns, neighborhoods, and extraordinary communities. We strongly believe that the State of Maine does not have to choose between historic preservation protections and zoning reforms. Both are needed and recognized as critical components of any community's comprehensive planning goals.

Historic district designation, based on the historic character of a place, ensures that new construction projects within its boundaries have a contextual relationship to the neighborhood, while still clearly being of their own time. It also provides a forum for residents to participate in proposed changes in their neighborhood. Preservation also supports state and local goals to adopt sustainable building policies. The reuse of existing buildings offers significant environmental benefits over new construction, and renewable energy technologies including solar panels have been approved in historic districts across Maine.



In Portland, in the more than thirty years since the historic preservation ordinance was passed, it has proved integral to planning and economic development strategies. More than 400 new units of housing were built or approved in Portland's historic districts in the last five years; nearly 75% of those units are affordable.

Historic preservation keeps buildings alive, active, and responsive to the needs of the community. Historic districts encourage good design through a transparent, participatory review process. District regulations allow for density and change without destroying our neighborhood history and sense of place.

We strongly believe that historic districts are critical to telling Maine's story. Recognizing the significance of our state's working class and immigrant history and the impact its residents had on state's development, is critical to understanding the full story of Maine. Our job here at Greater Portland Landmarks and Maine Preservation is to continue to advocate for these historic places so they will not disappear, as we work collaboratively with the state and region to help determine how our history responds to and meets our evolving needs.

We believe strongly in the need for more affordable housing and support the overall intent of this bill. However, we want to ensure that there are no unintended consequences from the lack of clear definitions that will negatively impact the extraordinary built history of our state.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah Hansen".

Sarah Hansen  
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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tara Kelly".

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