

## **Testimony in support of L.D. 2003**

Senator Daughtry, Representative Sylvester and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing, my name is Nat Jordan, I am a 22-year-old resident of Cape Elizabeth, and I am testifying in favor of L.D. 2003.

Opponents of this bill will argue that localities should be able to evaluate their own zoning and decide on their own solutions to the housing crisis. I'm from Cape Elizabeth and I'm here to tell you why that won't work.

Over the past year and a half, I've listened to nearly every town council meeting where housing has been discussed. It's safe to say I've heard my fair share of "town character," "feel" and "overcrowding."

Dunham Court, the Szanton Company's recent affordable housing proposal in Cape, was not built because our system of town government does not work. The endless cycle of workshops, meetings, petition drives, referendums, studies and now ad-hoc committees scares away developers and prevents housing diversity.

It's why we haven't built affordable housing in 50 years. Our system empowers a handful of time-rich homeowners to delay, delay, delay so that lower-income neighbors cannot join us in Cape Elizabeth. That system needs to change. Think about it — the wealthy few making decisions about whether to build housing, decisions in which the poor have no say because they can't afford to live here. Cape Elizabeth is not a sovereign state. The governance of our town must take into account our neighbors in greater Portland, neighbors who sit on years-long waitlists for affordable housing, entire families living in hotel rooms by the mall. The state must step in to make those voices heard.

I'll end on a personal note. I'm 22. As the slogan goes, "Live and Work in Maine," but young people can't work here if we can't afford to live here. I want to move back after I finish school, but frankly I'm not sure that will be financially practical. I want a future where people who grew up in Cape can stay here without making six figures. Where working-class single parents can keep their children in our

schools. Where people from all over the world can move to our beautiful community, where our schools aren't insular, where the "Welcome to Cape Elizabeth" sign doesn't function as a de facto gate.

But at this point, I'm convinced we need state intervention to make that future happen. L.D. 2003 — specifically the 4-unit zoning change, the municipal review board, and the priority development zone requirement — is a great start.

Thank you for your work on this issue. It's time for bold action.