

Debora Keller  
Bath Housing Development Corporation  
LD 2003

Re: LD 2003- An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Commission To Increase Housing Opportunities in Maine by Studying Zoning and Land Use Restrictions

My name is Debora Keller and I am a resident of Bath, the Executive Director of Bath Housing Authority, and the Secretary of Bath Housing Development Corporation. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for your consideration. Bath Housing offers its support for LD2003.

This bill is the single most important piece of legislation I have seen in the 22 years I've been involved with housing development in Maine. It provides tools for local governments such that each community can play a part in addressing the statewide housing need. We have seen a 70% increase in rental prices in Bath over the past six years. Wage increases have not kept pace with these increased housing costs.

There is no quick fix for this problem -- but we need more housing, and we need to be working at this problem from a variety of angles. I am fortunate to be working in a community and region that has been proactive in addressing housing issues. We have a four-pronged framework for action that involves policy & planning, direct assistance to households, preservation, and production. Production must be our focus right now and this bill will facilitate this.

There are a few aspects of this bill I'd like to highlight:

1. It naturally scales to different sized communities. Service center communities can't bear the brunt of the solution.
2. It offers technical assistance and policy carrots.
3. The density bonus.

A quick example related to a 3-acre parcel we are looking at right now (housing to replace a 60-space surface parking lot).

- o Current: 23 units currently with 46 parking spaces required.
- o NEW LAW: Would provide for 57 apartments and 38 parking spaces.
- o RESULTS:

- Financially feasibility – land cost reduced per unit
- More housing units – mixed income. Maybe even 50/50.
- Less unnecessary surface parking,
- Ability to serve a range of incomes,
- No need for timely and risky contract zone.
- And, honestly, less chance for NIMBY opposition to a project.

Every community in Maine has a responsibility to be part of the solution to our housing issues and this bill provides for that. I wholeheartedly support this legislation. Thank you.