

Tony Payne
Falmouth
LD 2003

Senator Daughtry, Rep. Sylvester and members of the Committee. I normally appear before your committee to talk about workers' compensation legislation. Today, I simply want to share my experience as an employer, an active member of the Portland Regional Chamber and a lifelong Maine resident who supports LD 2003.

At work, we have some employees making more than \$100,000 a year but even they can't find an affordable home or condo within a reasonable commuting distance of Portland. Asking prices are routinely exceeded and down payments are prohibitive. This madness isn't confined to Southern Maine – it's everywhere according to newspaper reports. The issue is that housing demand has exceeded supply but LD 2003 will encourage housing development in all Maine towns closer to existing infrastructure, town services, schools, medical care and jobs.

Serving six years on my town council taught me about smart growth policies – ways to save money in town budgets. That experience also taught me that a lot of folks have “banked” land for their retirement income that could be more valuable and beneficial if they were allowed more than one dwelling unit on them. Sadly, restrictive and exclusionary zoning has limited their retirement security.

Here's what we know:

- Housing costs (mortgages, rents, energy, taxes, etc.) have exceeded 25 percent of annual household income
- Transportation (a function of folks going further away from their jobs to find a home) is eating up another 25 percent of that same household budget
- School transportation costs (more busses, drivers and fuel) are rising because busses are required to go greater distances to pick up and deliver kids
- Water lines, sewer lines and power/cable/internet lines are being extended because single-family zoning pushes people away from towns
- Town plowing and road maintenance budgets are strained which drives up property taxes, as well

Again, prices are a matter of supply and demand and Maine is out of kilter. For example, I grew up here and my parents bought a house in Deering Center in Portland for \$4,000 in 1950. We all walked to school and lived right on the bus route. Now, according to the inflation calculator, that house should be worth \$46,663 today. Instead, its estimated Zillow sales price is \$639,000 with a monthly mortgage of \$3,200.

If we're going to replenish our aging workforce, we need housing that low and middle income folks can afford. I believe LD 2003 makes common sense and will break the log jam to get thousands of Mainers and new Mainers quality housing close to their places of work. Please vote Ought To Pass. Thank you.

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