

TESTIMONY OF JEFF SHERMAN

LD 2003 – Ought To Pass

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

Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing

March 7, 2022

Senator Daughtry, Representative Sylvester, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing, greetings. My name is Jeff Sherman. I am a resident of Portland and a second-year student at the University of Maine School of Law. I submit this testimony today in favor of LD 2003.

Maine is in the middle of a housing crisis and the state's current policy is unsustainable. The cost of housing is increasing for both homeowners and renters. In turn, price increases are pushing out older Mainers and young people. An estimated shortage of 25,000 housing units is holding back economic growth as Maine businesses struggle to find workers. At the same time, the state's policy overwhelmingly encourages new growth in the form of detached single-family homes on larger plots of land. Before our eyes the lush woods of Maine are transforming into sprawling suburbs.

Furthermore, this trend is costing Mainer's money. At the state level, sprawl requires the state to spend more taxpayer money on infrastructure in previously remote areas. In the suburbs, towns are saddled with additional costs as they are forced to provide services such as police, fire, emergency, road maintenance, and plowing to a larger geographic area. Finally, older cities and town centers are left to support underused infrastructure with a declining population and tax base. In short, all Mainers, regardless of whether they are a homeowner or a renter, or whether they live in Aroostook or Cumberland County are paying more and getting less.

LD 2003 meets the moment. By encouraging growth, this bill would allow for new housing to be built in areas of Maine that already support residential living. Importantly, this bill will not eliminate single family homes. Instead, this bill increases residential density by allowing property owners to build different styles of houses on their land. This addresses the crisis in two ways. First, it allows more units to be built which will lower costs. This means that older Mainers will be able to stay in their communities, young people will be able to put down roots, and Maine businesses will remain competitive because their employees will be able to afford a life here. Second, it creates more efficiency by increasing the economies of scale that have historically allowed Maine cities and towns to provide quality services to residents without increasing taxes.

Political inaction has not worked. Housing is already expensive, and the problem is only getting worse. LD 2003 represents a sustainable, equitable, economical, and bipartisan approach to housing that Mainers deserve. I urge you to vote ought to pass.

Sincerely,

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