

Janice Vance  
Kennebunk  
LD 2003

Dear Senator Daughtry, Representative Sylvester, and Members of the Labor and Housing Committee:

My name is Janice Vance and I live in Kennebunk. I am a member of my town's Planning Board and the Comprehensive Plan Committee. I have specific concerns about LD 2003. Under "Definitions" on page 4 your definition of affordable housing uses the phrase "can afford a majority of the units." It would be easier for both applicants and towns if a specific percentage is used. On page 8 you use the term "priority development zones." The state's Comprehensive Plan process requires towns to divide areas into Growth Areas, Transitional Areas, and Rural Areas. The term "priority development zone" is not used. I believe it would be a good idea to match your terminology and intent with Comprehensive Plan goals, and review the Housing chapters in the Plans on the DACF's website if you have not already done so to see the wide variety of situations that exist. In our recent preparation of a new Comprehensive Plan, we dedicated research into why we have slipped below our target goal of having 10% of our housing units deeded affordable. We already allow accessory units, reduce performance standards such as building setbacks for multi-family, and give density bonuses for affordable units. But developers routinely cite the high cost of land, site development, labor and building supplies as significant impediments to creating workforce and affordable housing. Because of this, I do not believe mandating a standard density bonus and reduction of off-street parking requirements for every town in Maine will achieve your goal. I would encourage you to look at ways to help defray the cost of development, possibility by providing tax grants, vouchers or grants for qualified developers. I would also urge you to look at incenting the re-development of under-utilized or empty buildings, which is less expensive than developing raw land, and can result in a beneficial mix of affordable, workforce and market rate residential units combined with commercial uses that provide employment.

Thank you for listening to my comments, and for trying to work on a problem that exists across the entire country. There is more work to be done before committing to the final language in this bill.