

Scott Vonnegut
Portland
LD 2003

Testimony to Legislature's Labor and Housing Committee as a Member of Housing Justice Maine in Support of LD 2003

Senator Daughtry and Representative Sylvester and Committee members,

My name is Scott Vonnegut. I am from Portland and am here as a member of Housing Justice Maine to speak in support of LD 2003 sponsored by Speaker of the House, Ryan Fecteau. Housing Justice Maine is a coalition of 8 organizations comprising hundreds of people working on solutions to Maine's affordable housing crisis.

I gave testimony before you three weeks ago in support of LD1673 "An Act To Create a Comprehensive Permit Process for the Construction of Affordable Housing" That bill creates an expedited process to review and approve affordable housing projects throughout the State. The bill before us today, LD2003, does not include an expedited review process at the local level for the creation of affordable homes in Maine. Because of the urgency to meet the enormous need for housing which low to medium income Mainers can afford, the expedited review process created by LD1673 is an absolutely essential law for the legislature to pass to help alleviate the housing crisis. In addition, both bills create a State level review board to which entities working to create affordable housing can appeal a municipality's denial of a permit. This State level appeals Board will take testimony from the municipality and the applicant whose permit was denied to assure a fair and equitable process to make sure the project meets local and state land use regulations while meeting the need for affordable housing throughout the State.

Both LD 1673 and LD2003 create a State level Board of Appeals for affordable housing projects that are denied a permit at the municipal level. But the bill before you today does not include the municipal expedited review process or Fair Housing goals included in LD 1673 which establishes metrics to ensure that the amount of affordable housing stock in a city or town can meet the housing needs of its residents. I think the local expedited review process and Fair Housing goals are important in recognizing each municipalities' responsibility to play a part in creating housing that its low to moderate income residents can afford.

Despite whatever redrafting is required and legislative strategy used, the passage of these bills, which will accelerate the creation of affordable housing, is absolutely essential for the welfare of the State of Maine, for without it, the workers who stock our stores, run our production lines, and drive our firetrucks will not be able to afford to live here.

Thank you