

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 like LD2003 creates 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.

LD1673 also 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. Another feature of LD1673 not included in the Speaker's bill before us today is the provision for Fair Housing goals which establishes metrics to ensure that there is an adequate supply of affordable housing stock in a city or town to meet the housing needs of its residents.

Despite not having these important provisions of LD1673, there are important provisions in LD2003 which will help increase the production of affordable housing that include:

- Increasing the allowable density of affordable housing and their long-term affordability
- Allowing up to four dwelling units meeting setback requirements, on land zoned for residential use
- Allowing accessory dwelling units on the same lot as a single-family dwelling unit
- Providing technical assistance for municipalities to better understand how zoning ordinances and land use ordinances impact the availability of housing

Despite what redrafting of legislation may be required, the passage of a bill which includes a local expedited review process for affordable housing projects and identifies Fair Housing goals for municipalities is essential in making each municipality responsible for playing a part in creating housing that its low to moderate income residents can afford. These two bills are 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

Scott Vonnegut
Portland
LD 2003

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