

Richard Whiting
Auburn
LD 2003

Senator Daughtry, Representative Sylvester, & Members of the Committee:

I am Richard Whiting, a past Chair of the Maine Affordable Housing Coalition, former Executive Director of Auburn Housing Authority, and current Ward 1 City Councilor for the City of Auburn. I am proud of Auburn's long history of providing meaningful housing choices through a variety of neighborhood types

ranging from downtown urban to inner ring suburban to outer ring suburban to rural.

While I believe L.D. 2003 contains many positive provisions, I believe it also contains many problematic provisions.

Positives:

-Accessory Dwelling Units make sense, & can offer useful affordable housing options, with relatively low impact, EXCEPT that single family homes governed by shoreland zoning or in resource protection areas, particularly around public water supplies, should NOT be included in this.

-Priority Development Zones make sense and are a way to channel development in a smart growth, manageable fashion.

-Affordable Housing Density Bonuses make sense and can help mitigate the high cost of housing.

-Technical Assistance, Grants and Municipal Incentives make sense and may help smaller municipalities, in particular, to undertake more strenuous efforts to get housing built.

Negatives:

In general, the language appears to treat shoreland zoning, watershed protection efforts, and other serious environmental concerns, too lightly. Nothing in this bill should be allowed to override common-sense protections of public water supply protection zones, or to endanger water quality of Maine's lakes, ponds and rivers.

The mandate forcing all single family lots in Maine to become 4 family lots goes too far and in waterfront zones, may produce housing, but it won't be affordable.

A Municipal Housing Development Permit Review Board appears to be a bit of an overreach, and perhaps unnecessary, particularly if some of the more palatable provisions of this bill are adopted. We certainly don't need this oversight in Auburn, and I think that is true of most Maine service center communities.

To summarize, I thank the Commission to Increase Housing Opportunities in Maine for putting forth a robust proposal, which I think is ripe for ratcheting back in a way as noted above that doesn't compromise the commission's intent, but can achieve a majority vote.

Respectfully,

Richard S. Whiting