

**Testimony submitted by Bronwen Tudor, Select Board Member, Town of Georgetown
Maine,
in opposition to LD 2003 on March 7, 2022**

LD 2003 Fails to Address Affordable Housing in Small and/or Seasonal Towns

As a member of the Select Board in the Town of Georgetown, Sagadahoc County, I strongly oppose both the premise and the content of LD 2003. The legislation as written undermines the fundamental concept of local governance by local residents without providing viable solutions to the lack of affordable housing in communities like ours. LD 2003 would impose a single state-wide standard for development, without regard to local conditions, local concerns, or an individual community's history and vision for the future.

Legislating increased population density without planning for the increased demand on public infrastructure (water, sewer, roads, parking transportation), as well as determining access to essential commercial resources (grocery stores, gas stations, medical facilities, banks and credit unions) may offer a quick fix to the stated problem of providing more housing, but is a prescription for community disaster in the long run.

Communities like ours need financial aid and technical assistance, rather than punitive mandates or prohibitions, to help us address the housing shortage as part of a larger vision incorporating other important aspects of our community life. We believe local community concerns should include protection of the environment, preservation of historic architecture, and recognition of the 'village' identity many Maine residents value.

There are approximately 1,000 houses on Georgetown Island about half of which are seasonal. The Town has no municipal water or sewer, no police force, no medical facilities, no grocery stores, no gas station and no public transportation. We do have a volunteer fire department and an elementary school.

The only zoning requirements for new construction (aside from Shoreland Zoning which impacts much of our land area,) are a two acre lot minimum and modest set-back requirements from the road and property lines. The only restriction on multi-family dwellings is dictated by the need for a plumbing permit. If a site will support a four-bedroom septic system, you can build a four-bedroom house or any configuration of apartments adding up to four bedrooms.

The two acre lot minimum addresses local soil characteristics that limit the size and siting options for septic leach fields, and the lack of a significant fresh water aquifer to supply the well for each new dwelling. In a few grand-fathered areas like Five Islands and Bay Point, where houses close together, the lots can't support a leach field and instead must operate overboard discharge systems. In these same areas wells often run dry in summer when rainfall is low and usage is high.

In addition, though not by decree, two-acre lots provide space for off-road parking which is a necessity since most of our roads are narrow, unlit, and without paved shoulders. No matter where you live on the island, you're at least six miles, often twelve or fifteen, from a grocery store, doctor's office or credit union as well as most employment opportunities. Since there is no public transportation, every dwelling unit needs at least one car.

Our Comprehensive Plan recognizes the need for affordable housing in Georgetown both to attract young families and allow current residents to age in place. LD 2003, however, will not provide it. Nor will it help us resolve the economic, logistical, and environmental obstacles to creating it. We urge the Legislature to revise, amend or table this legislation and to re-consider ways to encourage rather than enforce the admirable goal of creating affordable housing throughout the state without eroding local control of local development.

At the very least, communities of a certain size and/or those without public water, sewer or public transportation should be exempt from the provisions of this bill and the state review board it would establish. Thank you for the opportunity to address these issues.