

**Testimony In Support Of
LD 1929, An Act to Protect Consumers by Licensing Home Building Contractors**

My name is Elizabeth Frazier, and I am submitting these comments on behalf of the Maine Chapter of the American Institutes of Architects (AIA Maine) in favor of adopting LD 1929, An Act to Protect Consumers by Licensing Home Building Contractors. AIA Maine is a state component of the American Institute of Architects, whose missions is to support architects and architecture through leadership, advocacy, fellowship, and design excellence.

Maine has one of the oldest housing stocks in the nation and utilizes far more energy to heat our homes in this northern climate. At the same time, there is a well-documented need for additional workforce housing throughout Maine. A recent study by the Maine State Housing Authority highlighted the need for Maine to create over 80,000 units of housing by 2030 to remedy historic underproduction and to meet expected population growth and household change. As such, now is a good time to adopt a law to require General Contractors carry a license to better protect the home consumer in Maine.

At present, residential contractors do not need a license, nor continuing education, to build homes across the state of Maine. Home contractors are not regulated in any way by the State of Maine. However, licensure is required for almost every other building trade in Maine, including architects, engineers, plumbers, electricians, oil burner technicians, manufacturers, dealers and installers of mobile and nodular homes. General Contractors have a responsibility to the well-being and life safety of their clients, as well as following modern building codes and energy efficient construction methods. With no oversight or recourse to their actions, the consumer is the one paying the price for under-performing home contractors.

As Maine adopts new building codes, and building science continues to evolve to create more energy efficient homes, and the need to create more resiliency in our homes to accommodate a changing and more extreme climate, it is imperative that the state protects residential consumers. Since 2018, the Attorney General's office has received over 3,000 complaints against home construction contractors. The loss usually falls on the consumer when things go wrong. Now is the time to protect consumers and their homes.

Additionally, Maine is an outlier when it comes to home contractor licensing. Over 30 states have some form of state licensing or registration. With Maine facing a significant housing shortage, now is not the time to continue being an outlier.

AIA Maine sees this legislation as the first stepping stone for more robust licensure and continuing education requirements for those involved in the construction industry. Maine needs parity in its licensing requirements. In fact, AIA Maine is currently the principal proponent of a bill for continuing education requirements for architects as well and is in the process of introducing a bill in that regard.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important bill. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss it with you further.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Fraizer, on behalf of AIA Maine