

To the Honorable Members of the New Hampshire House Housing Committee:

My name is Kathleen Tierney of 178 New Boston Road, Candia, NH. I have lived in Candia for the past 15 years and am an active voter. I attend the town's planning board meetings. While I want to see more housing options – specifically more affordable housing options – so that first-time home buyers can join our community, I am opposed to this bill because I do not believe it will best address the need for more housing, and specifically, more affordable housing.

First, there are municipalities currently working to determine how to provide more opportunities for housing. Candia has pursued InvestNH Housing Opportunity Planning Grants (HOP) because its planning board wants to create more housing opportunities. Candia has revised its regulations to include workforce housing, and recently residents approved detached Auxiliary Housing Units (ADUs) in addition to attached ADUs. The HOP steering committee surveyed residents and presented the results to the planning board. The board's next steps will include an audit of the town's land use regulations with recommendations for changes to promote housing development. Neighboring towns, like Auburn, already have revised regulations to include smaller lot sizes. SB 84 would seem to negate all the proactive work currently underway in towns like Candia.

Second, if one of the aims of this bill is to create more affordable housing, I would argue that smaller lot sizes do not always equate to more affordable homes. Addressing only lot size seems to leave much of the decision on what to build up to the developer, who is in the business of making money. There are developers who would put large homes on these smaller lots. Solutions to increase affordable housing stock could include new ways to construct and produce homes, builder incentives for affordable homes, and increased access to home financing.

Third, a developer could take advantage of this proposed legislation and use shared wells for up to 3 homes in the subdivision as a way of avoiding the more stringent rules about pump testing and water quality testing required for community wells (more than 4 homes). Several years ago, there was a developer in a Rockingham town that proposed shared wells for his subdivision of 29 homes. Many NH towns do not have public water or sewer. Creating large subdivisions in these towns without pump and water quality testing could jeopardize future water availability and quality for the homeowners in these subdivisions as well as for surrounding homeowners.

Because NH municipalities on well and septic face unique issues for creating more housing, perhaps a solution that would offer incentives to create smaller lot sizes based on soil type could be looked into. It seems somewhat arbitrary to come up with a minimum lot size for all of the state without looking at each municipality's situation. Depending on soil type, municipalities might then be able to better determine where smaller lot sizes would be most feasible in their communities. This might be a better tool to help create affordable housing versus a blanket decrease in lot sizes.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Respectfully,  
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