

The Maine Heritage Policy Center Testimony to Support LD 1981 “An Act Regarding the Regulation of Tiny Houses”

Senator Diamond, Representative McLean and distinguished members of the Committee on Transportation, my name is Adam Crepeau and I serve as a policy analyst at The Maine Heritage Policy Center. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of LD 1981.

Tiny houses are a relatively new phenomenon and are becoming a modern lifestyle choice for individuals and families who enjoy simple living at an affordable price. However, the state’s regulations are putting this lifestyle in jeopardy with unaccommodating rules that threaten the success of Maine’s small businesses.

In June 2019, the Maine Secretary of State sent a letter to municipalities that said town officials are no longer allowed to register, assign vehicle identification numbers, or title tiny homes in Maine. Now, in order to move a tiny home, owners must obtain a one-time transit permit from the Secretary of State to transport it from point A to point B.¹ According to the Secretary of State, tiny homes do not fit the definition of a camp trailer or trailer under Title 29-A — this is how they were registered and titled prior to the June letter.

In the letter, the Secretary of State also cited “safety concerns” as a reason for this change — we would like to challenge this view. According to the Tiny Homes of Maine LLC website, these structures are no more than 8.5 feet wide and less than 20 to 30 feet long by themselves. When the length of the vehicle is included, the length does not exceed 60 feet. According to Title 29-A, Section 2390, the length and width of a trailer may not exceed 65 feet and 8.5 feet, respectively.² These structures are also shorter than 13.5 feet, the maximum height restriction in Title 29-A, Section 2380.³ Therefore, these tiny homes fit within the dimension restrictions that are currently in state law.

Because these structures fit within the dimensions specified in state statute and are literally affixed to a trailer, there is no reason why they should not be classified as a camp trailer or trailer.

¹<https://www.facebook.com/tinyhomesofmaine/photos/a.809381825843923/2487819324666823/?type=3&theater>

² <https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/29-A/title29-Asec2390.html>; <https://drivinglaws.aaa.com/tag/trailer-dimensions/>

³ <https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/29-A/title29-Asec2380.html>; <https://drivinglaws.aaa.com/tag/trailer-dimensions/>

In addition, the demand for tiny homes is growing, especially among millennials — the same generation the State of Maine is currently trying to attract to mitigate the effects of our aging workforce.⁴ Under these circumstances, it is perplexing that the state would make it more difficult for millennials to move or buy a tiny home in Maine. With student loan debt on the rise, tiny homes are turning out to be a good investment for millennials who have a high income-debt ratio or are still climbing the economic ladder.

Put simply, all Mainers should be able to move their tiny homes from place to place without having to ask the government for a permit with every relocation. Clearly, government regulation cannot keep up with the rapid changes being made as it relates to where and how people want to live. The solution is not burdensome regulation under the auspices of “safety.” For those reasons, The Maine Heritage Policy Center strongly urges the committee to vote, “Ought to Pass” on LD 1981. Thank you.

⁴ <https://www.cnn.com/2018/11/02/success/tiny-homes/index.html>;
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/personalfinance/real-estate/2018/06/18/real-estate-alternatives-reasons-millennials-choosing-tiny-homes/693153002/>