
Proposed MEPA amendment public comment

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To MEPA-regs (EEA) <MEPA-regs@mass.gov>

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To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express support for the proposed MEPA amendments to streamline MEPA review of qualifying housing and mixed use housing.

I am a 21 year old student at UMass Amherst who, like all other young people, hopes to own a home one day. But when I think 5 or 10 or 15 or 20 years ahead, it is utterly unclear if that will ever be possible. I also hope to have children who will breathe clean air and drink clean water, but when I think about what the environment will look like in 50 years, I am uncertain. When considering this proposed amendment, which seeks to limit the scope of an environmental protection for the sake of more affordable housing, both crises need to be taken seriously.

It is clear that the environment needs to be protected, and housing needs to be affordable. But when an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) causes a year of delays in construction and hundreds of thousands of dollars of additional costs, when developers are disincentivized to build housing, when those additional costs and lower supply of housing increases the price of housing, housing affordability is not adequately being considered. Something needs to change.

Still, EIRs do a lot of good - they genuinely help the environment. Someone who cares about both crises should support a middle ground, where MEPA and EIRs exist, but are not an excessive barrier to housing construction. This is what the proposed amendment does - it strategically streamlines EIRs in the places it does the most damage, and keeps it in place where it does the most good.

The proposed amendment is a politically viable regulation that would tangibly benefit people's lives. It is not a silver bullet, and if passed, there would be much more work to be done on both the environmental and housing affordability fronts. But it would be an excellent step in the right direction.

Best,

Eli Susskind