



Senate Bill 166

AAC the Appointment and Qualification of the State Building Inspector, Submission of Certain Documents to the State Building Inspector, Internet Publication of the List of Variances from the State Building Code, the Period of Service of an Acting Building Official, Certain Acoustical Standards and Path Marking Systems

Testimony of Director Darren Hobbs

Joint Committee on Public Safety and Security

March 3, 2022

Good morning Senator Osten, Representative Horn, Senator Champagne, Representative Howard and distinguished members of the Public Safety and Security Committee. My name is Darren Hobbs and I am the Director of Regulatory Compliance at the Department of Administrative Services ("DAS"). I want to thank the Committee for raising our bill.

Senate Bill 166 makes minor, but meaningful changes to the statutes governing the state building code and the qualifications and appointment of the State Building Inspector. This proposal increases the State Building Inspector applicant pool with highly qualified applicants, addresses issues presented by municipalities concerning building official recruitment and retention, and eliminates outdated statutory language that conflicts with the state building code.

I urge the Committee to support this bill.

Section 1 broadens the acceptable qualifications of a State Building Inspector to include licensed building officials, which will enable the state to draw from a larger and more diverse talent pool. It also aligns the appointment process with similar State Fire Marshal statutes by changing the appointer from the Governor to the Commissioner of Administrative Services.

Our building official prelicensure training and testing program and continuing education requirements are the most rigorous in New England. As a result, the state's building officials are very well trained on all construction topics and the procedural and technical aspects of the building code. This proposal adds those talented individuals to the potential pool of applicants.

Section 2 eliminates the requirement that two copies of the plans and specifications for a large-scale project be submitted to the State Building Inspector as part of the building permit application. Currently, most applications are submitted electronically. This proposal merely eliminates the obsolete requirement within the existing statute.

Section 3 allows DAS to publish its biennial list of code variances and exemptions electronically on its website rather than sending the list to every local building official. This proposal further accomplishes DAS's goal of modernizing the statutes.

Section 4 allows acting building officials to remain as a temporary replacement for the prior building official for up to 360 days to provide municipalities more time to recruit and hire a permanent building official.

Under current law, municipalities can appoint a temporary building official for 180 days, so this would give them an additional 180 days or until a permanent building official is appointed, whichever is earlier. We've heard from municipalities that they are facing real challenges with building official recruitment and retention. This proposal aims to alleviate those concerns.

Sections 5 repeals outdated language and language that conflicts with the state building code regarding educational sound insulation and luminous safety path markings.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. We look forward to working with the Committee to address these issues.