

Issue brief

AIA MA Priority Level

This is a High Priority bill

The Ask

Ask your legislator to oppose these bills

For more information

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HB 2321/SB 1523 – An Act relative to safe building materials

Sponsors: Rep. Daniel Donahue/Senator Paul Feeney

Purpose

These bills would enact building code language into the Massachusetts General Laws, explicitly targeting “light frame construction.” They propose new regulations and requirements for structures containing more than two dwelling or sleeping units using light frame construction. Under the guise of fire safety and at the expense of housing affordability and sustainable construction practices, the bills would expressly limit the types of products and materials used for this type of construction to only concrete.

Key provisions include: Terminology Clarification, Light Frame Construction Standards, Contractor Enrollment, Fire Safety Monitoring and Placard Directives.

Comments

Initially introduced in 2019, these bills would have a direct effect on the professional practice of architecture by enacting building code language directly in the Massachusetts General Laws by codifying regulations related to building materials and construction methods that have traditionally been guided by the International Building Code (IBC) produced by the International Code Council (ICC).

In 2019, AIA MA formed a coalition of developers, contractors, building owners, real estate professionals, building code experts, and other design professionals to express strong opposition to these bills and has successfully argued to the Legislature that these bills would restrict the use of construction materials to only concrete, negatively impacting housing affordability, sustainable construction practices, and jobs in Massachusetts.

The coalition has emphasized that the ICC’s code adoption process, which involves a diverse group of experts and stakeholders, is based on the latest science and engineering, ensuring continuous updates and improvements in building codes, and contends that any changes to the building code should be left to the Board of Building Regulations and Standards (BBRS), which already oversees the code’s review process in Massachusetts.

The coalition has vigorously defended the safety of wood construction, pointing out that fires are rare and occur across various building types and materials. It has also argued that wood construction is cost-effective and crucial for addressing the housing crisis in Massachusetts. Moreover, the coalition has highlighted the sustainability of wood as a building material compared to the proposed option of concrete only.

