SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 29

INTRODUCED BY M. NOLAND

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING AN INTERIM STUDY ON ECONOMIC REDEVELOPMENT AND WORKFORCE HOUSING; AND REQUIRING THAT THE FINAL RESULTS OF THE STUDY BE REPORTED TO THE 69TH LEGISLATURE.

WHEREAS, access to safe, affordable, workforce housing for both renters and homeowners is essential to Montana's social and economic welfare; and

WHEREAS, homeownership has been an essential element of the American Dream for decades; and

WHEREAS, documented social benefits of homeownership include increased charitable activity, greater civic participation, neighborhood attachment, lower incidences of teen pregnancy, higher high school graduation rates, better physical and psychological health, and significant increases in wealth and in reported life satisfaction, self-esteem, and happiness; and

WHEREAS, workforce housing is an increasingly difficult problem for many Montana communities. With relatively few workforce homes available for working families and with much of the existing workforce inventory aging and in need of rehabilitation, many working families are being priced out of housing markets; and

WHEREAS, in Montana the average house price is $430,528, and the state has seen the second largest increase in house prices out of all 50 states, with a 79.4% increase in the past 5 years; and

WHEREAS, in 2022, the average national rent increase was 11.3%, but the average rent increase was 14.7% in Yellowstone County, 18.6% in Gallatin County, 18.9% in Missoula County, and 36.5% in Lewis and Clark County; and

WHEREAS, families who pay more than 30% of their income for housing are considered cost-burdened and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and medical care; and

WHEREAS, workforce housing remains an urgent priority issue in the state and poses a problem not only for first-time home buyers and renters, but also for employers looking for qualified employees; and

WHEREAS, using a combination of public data, data provided by local sources, research from the
literature, information from other states, and data on Montana, the study will assess the landscape of federal
and state direct and indirect funding efforts for increasing the quantity and quality of available workforce homes
in Montana and comparable states.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF
THE STATE OF MONTANA:

That the Legislative Council be requested to designate an appropriate interim committee or statutory
committee, pursuant to section 5-5-217, MCA, or direct sufficient staff resources to:

1. examine the current availability of workforce housing in metropolitan and rural areas of the
   state;
2. identify existing federal, state, and local subsidies, grants, and other incentives and programs
   available to increase the availability of workforce housing, the extent to which the subsidies, grants, and other
   incentives and programs are utilized, and the successfulness of their usage in increasing the availability of
   workforce housing;
3. examine the challenges facing those in need of workforce housing, including financial, social,
   and logistic challenges;
4. assess the ability of local governments to leverage existing laws and resources, including
   partnering with nonprofit and for-profit entities, to increase the availability of workforce housing;
5. examine the best practice of other states in increasing the availability of workforce housing;
6. examine any unique challenges faced by local governments across the state resulting from
   differences in economic prosperity and considering the differences between the metropolitan and rural areas of
   the state;
7. evaluate the potential benefits, cost savings, and improved affordability from utilizing energy
   efficiency standards in housing; and
8. assess the feasibility and cost savings from partnerships between public utilities and private
   businesses in replacing aging housing in existing programs with newer modular and mobile home units.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the study include input from appropriate stakeholders, including but
not limited to the Department of Commerce, the Montana Board of Housing, the Department of Labor and
Industry, local entities, and other stakeholders as appropriate.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that if the study is assigned to staff, any findings or conclusions be presented to and reviewed by an appropriate committee designated by the Legislative Council.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all aspects of the study, including presentation and review requirements, be concluded prior to September 15, 2024.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the final results of the study, including any findings, conclusions, comments, or recommendations of the appropriate committee, be reported to the 69th Legislature.

- END -