

**House Economic Development and Workforce Services Committee**  
02/09/2026

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**Bill: 1st substitute HB 184 - Small Lots and Starter Home Amendments**

Sponsor: Representative Ward

Floor Sponsor: Senator Fillmore

**UASD Position: Oppose**

This Bill deals with regulation of certain land uses in residential zones.

Discussion: The sponsor stated that the Bill would allow a city to approve or deny the construction of a small or lower-cost home, such as one built on a smaller lot or with a smaller footprint, without requiring rezoning of an entire zoning district, and said the measure is intended to address Utah's housing affordability crisis by reducing zoning-related cost and time barriers. He explained that current zoning practices often make single small-home projects difficult to approve because they typically require broad rezoning and identified two main lower-cost housing options under the Bill: homes on smaller lots and starter homes. The sponsor said builders would accept additional design constraints in exchange for lower costs and described a new process allowing a property owner to submit a basic development plan and reference to the preferred regulation, after which the city would have five days to act; if the city takes no action within 30 days, the proposed use would become a permitted use, though all standard reviews and permits would still be required. He emphasized that the Bill does not restrict a city's ability to deny applications but ensures timely decisions and noted that the Bill includes criteria for starter homes priced at or below the county average along with flexibility on lot size, setbacks, and related standards while allowing local governments to document reasons for denial. The sponsor said that although discussions with the Utah League of Cities and Towns had occurred without agreement, he believes the Bill is necessary to improve housing affordability. The sponsor added that the 2nd substitute excludes counties of the 4th, 5th, and 6th class. The substitute was not adopted by the Committee.

Representative Shelley asked whether counties were excluded under the Bill, and the sponsor responded that the second substitute excluded counties of the 4th, 5th, and 6th class.

Representative Fiefia questioned why zoning rights would vest before a completed land use application is reviewed, and the sponsor replied that requiring a full application involves significant upfront costs that discourage projects, and that the Bill allows initial consideration without that investment while still requiring the full process later. Representative Fiefia further asked whether the Bill grants zoning and permit rights before feasibility is assessed and raised concerns about safety and review thresholds. The sponsor responded that the Bill applies only to single projects and that all standard reviews, including safety and infrastructure, would still occur. Representative Fiefia also asked about potential abuse of the 30-day timeline and serial filings, and the sponsor stated that 30 days is a reasonable estimate, but he is open to adjusting the timeframe and is willing to address concerns regarding potential abuse. Representative Cutler said he supported allowing consideration without forcing applicants to spend money on rezoning but raised concerns that the Bill creates a vested permitted use based on a sketch or concept and asked whether a variance process could be used instead and whether the language could be revised to avoid vesting rights too early. The sponsor responded that he is open to rewording the

Bill and wants to ensure cities take action without defaulting to denial due to legal risk. Representative Cutler suggested extending timelines and removing vesting while keeping the process moving.

Representative Shallenberger asked whether the Bill erodes city authority in favor of the state, creates a preferred land use that overrides local zoning, and whether the Bill increases the burden on cities to review preliminary sketches. The sponsor replied that it changes the balance in some instances but does not remove local control, cities retain final authority, reiterated that cities may deny requests and that infrastructure planning is not undermined, and that it does not increase the burden on cities to review preliminary sketches, but that he is open to refining the language if needed. Representative Hansen asked why cities are pushing back on the Bill. The sponsor said he could not speak on their behalf. Representative Hansen also asked whether discussions with cities had been exhausted. The sponsor responded that they had, while acknowledging a fundamental disagreement. Representative Hansen acknowledged the tension between housing affordability and density concerns.

Wasatch Advocates for Livable Communities spoke in support, stating that housing affordability is closely tied to how homes are allowed to be built and that current processes prevent small homes from being constructed. The Utah League of Cities and Towns spoke in opposition, arguing that zoning is essential for infrastructure and service planning, that there is no clear link between smaller lots and affordability, and that the Bill undermines long-term planning by allowing incomplete applications. Flex Ready Homes spoke in support, stating that zoning barriers have prevented affordable single-family homes and citing historical examples of small-lot housing. The City of Saratoga Springs spoke in opposition, expressing concerns about increased costs and impacts on roads, services, and water planning. The Utah Association of Realtors spoke in support, stating that the Bill balances private property rights with the responsibilities of cities. Frank Pinelli raised minor concerns, stating that affordability should be tied to household income, and he expressed concern about legislative authority over zoning. The Utah Property Rights Coalition and Americans for Prosperity Utah and the Utah Home Builders Association also spoke in support, stating that the Bill offers a new approach to housing affordability and questioning why cities oppose it.

Representative Owens requested that the Bill be held. Representative Fiebia stated that, while he supports housing affordability and starter homes, he does not believe the Bill correctly diagnoses the problem and supported holding the Bill. Representative Shelley also supported holding the Bill and noted concerns related to rural counties. Representative Cutler reiterated interest in revisions that would extend timelines and remove vesting while preserving the Bill's intent. The Bill was held in Committee.

Yeas: 9

Nays: 0

N/V: 1

**Outcome: 1st substitute HB 184 was held in Committee.**

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**Bill: 2nd substitute HB 416 - Firefighter Cancer Amendments**

Sponsor: Representative Teuscher

Floor Sponsor:

**UASD Position: Support**

This Bill creates the Firefighter Cancer Benefit Trust Fund.

Discussion: The sponsor presented a second substitute, which the Committee adopted. The sponsor stated that the Bill expands the list of cancers eligible for coverage under the Firefighter Cancer Benefit Trust Fund ("Fund"). The sponsor explained that the Bill addresses a gap between when a workers' compensation claim can begin and when a firefighter or other eligible individual first receives notice of a qualifying cancer diagnosis, which can delay treatment and increase costs. The Bill establishes a Fund to provide immediate benefits during this gap period and creates a board to oversee the Fund. The board is tasked with making recommendations to the Legislature regarding benefit levels, investments, and funding. The Bill allocates a portion of fire insurance premium tax revenue to increase and maintain the Fund. The sponsor stated that the funding source for Tier I firefighters within the Utah Retirement System is currently funded at approximately 110%. The excess revenue that is not needed to vest the retirement account would flow into the Fund to keep it fully funded.

Representative Cutler asked whether the \$10 million amount referenced in the Bill is a one-time allocation or ongoing. The sponsor responded that it represents the maximum amount that could be allocated, not a one-time appropriation. The Fire Chief from Lehi spoke in support and shared his personal experience with cancer and how the Bill would provide critical assistance. The Utah Fire and Rescue Academy spoke in support, noting that cancer screening is housed within the Academy and that the Fund would be managed through that structure. Professional Firefighters of Utah also spoke in support of the Bill.

Yeas: 7

Nays: 1

N/V: 2

**Outcome: 2nd substitute HB 416 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.**