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OPINION

Facts do not support proposed state legislation

Although the construction industry blames housing shortages on over-regulation, that assertion is politically distorted and dangerously misleading. Housing shortages and unaffordable costs of new homes – beyond the reach of many Georgians – are mostly caused by other factors. According to the National League of Cities, only about 5% of housing costs are linked to regulations.

Evidently motivated by exceptional examples of regulatory delays, the General Assembly will be considering House Bill 812 [HB812]. The proposal imposes foolhardy, rushed scheduling requirements on local development-permit review while also empowering the state to override any local regulations more rigorous than the state's scant minimum standards.

Financial conditions have far worse impact on housing availability than regulations. Under-building began with the 2008 financial crisis caused by hedge-fund speculation, making homebuilders wary of new project risks, cumulatively causing a national housing shortfall in the millions. Moreover, inflation has spiked building material costs, recently made worse by tariffs. Likewise, construction-worker shortages have raised labor costs as labor moved to other sectors.

The growing gap between household incomes and housing costs in the U.S. was further widened by the 2010 Supreme Court *Citizens United* decision. That ruling amplified corporate political influence, accelerating wealth concentration and shrinking the middle-class. Between financial manipulations, rising building costs, and declining buying-power, housing shortages are another dire predicament caused by prioritizing elite enrichment over public interests.

Center for a Sustainable Coast concludes that HB812 will deprive communities of local development control and worsen economic injustices, endangering their environment, health, and quality of life.

David Kyler
Center for a Sustainable Coast
Saint Simons Island