

Statement by Suzanne Kelly

House Revivers and Kelly Realty Management

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My name is Suzanne Kelly and I'm a resident of Bangor, Maine where my husband, Bob, and I have owned and operated a small business, House Revivers and Kelly Realty Management for over 25 years. We employ 10-15 workers, depending on the economy. It makes no business sense and no sense for our State to loosen regulations that protect our environment. As my husband is fond of saying, "it's like the hen house: sometimes it's a hassle to secure the door after collecting the eggs, but think of what the fox could do!

We can't afford to open the door to the damage that would be done to our environment – the clean air and water, and the beautiful land that we've conserved, by weakening or overturning the legislation that has taken us decades to put in place.

There are certainly ways that current regulations could be clarified and made more consistent, streamlining the process for small business owners who have a lot to tackle already. But in our business, we've generally found the regulations to be worthwhile. With House Revivers, our specialty is working to restore worthy, distressed, historic buildings, both residential and mixed use properties (offices, apartments, restaurants and retail) mainly in Bangor and its downtown. And although we know that at first there will be a learning curve, we are glad that the State is establishing uniform building codes, since they will protect both contractors and customers. Although Federal Laws for lead based paint abatement are complicated and time consuming to follow, they are important protections as well.

With Kelly Realty Management, my arm of the business, I end up managing some of the historic properties that we restore. State regulations, including the installation and maintenance of carbon monoxide detectors in apartments can be costly and tedious, especially when it comes to meeting deadlines. Disclosures about lead based paint are an extra paperwork headache. Again, all necessary.

On a daily basis, my husband and I see the value of the environmental regulations that protect our natural resources. We see it in the attitudes of new customers and tenants who come here from out of state. Many families, young professionals and new business owners move here because of our clean air and water, and beautiful parks and open space. When I hand a new tenant maps of City parks and hiking trails or directions to the Orono Bog Walk, their enthusiasm is palpable. It is this quality of place that is Maine's brand and we need to protect it.

There's no question that there are instances where the red tape associated with environmental regulations is challenging to the small business owner, but we need to make the system easier to navigate, not upend it. And there are some industries and business practices, like clear cutting and strip mining, that will never be compatible with the direction that we want our State to move in. So be it.

If we want to take care of the real back breakers of small business in Maine, let's start with health care and energy costs. But let's leave laws that protect our natural resources intact. Both in the short and long term, they are the friend of small business, and help our State grow in ways that benefit us all.

In terms of the guiding principles being announced today, I strongly believe that our lawmakers should only make changes in response to well documented opportunities for process improvements. They should not legislate based on anecdotes.