

Good afternoon, Sen. Nangle, Rep. Stover, and members of the State and Local Government Committee.

I am Zach Gelpey, executive director of Maine First Project.

I am here to urge a unanimous “ought not to pass” vote on LD 2167.

Maine already had a severe housing shortage five years ago, before illegal immigrants began arriving here in large numbers. Many of them were attracted by Portland’s status as Maine’s premiere sanctuary city, and its generous welfare benefits.

The problem is, even if we really want 75,000 unvetted foreign nationals who don’t speak English to settle here in the next five years – where are they supposed to live?

We can’t build housing fast enough to address the needs of thousands of lifelong Mainers who languish for years on affordable housing waitlists. Yet the Maine State Housing Authority is right now shoving those Mainers aside to give first-in-line preference to so-called “asylum seekers” who stepped off the bus in Portland after entering the United States illegally between ports of entry.

Mainers stranded on housing waitlists need not apply for the brand-new apartments that were recently completed in

Brunswick, South Portland, and Portland – and then set aside exclusively for non-citizens who have never paid a dime in Maine taxes. And the newcomers are getting two full years of free rent, courtesy of Maine taxpayers!

If LD 2167 becomes law, we can expect to see this blatant discrimination against Maine citizens get worse.

The Portland Press Herald reported two years ago that there's a five- to seven-year wait on a statewide list of 25,000 people seeking federal Section 8 housing vouchers.

Gov. Mills has not explained how her plan to boost immigration over the next five years is going to do anything except make Maine's housing nightmare much worse than it is right now.

Even if you agree with her that unlimited immigration is good for Maine, how is it humane or reasonable to welcome 75,000 unemployed, homeless migrants to Maine when we have less than 4,000 houses on the market?

Gov. Mills has no solution, and she has no credibility.

I urge you to vote "ought not to pass"