



February 9, 2023

Senator Peggy Rotundo
Representative Melanie Sachs
Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
Maine State Legislature
c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: Testimony in support of LD 258 and \$30M in funding to MaineHousing

Dear Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs:

My name is Richard A. Hooks Wayman, and I am a resident of Maine and serve as the President & CEO for Volunteers of America Northern New England which is headquartered in Brunswick. I write in support of the proposed Biennial Budget, LD 258, and the section on page 432 that allocates \$30 million in funding to the Maine State Housing Authority:

- \$15 million for the Rural Affordable Rental Housing Program and
- \$15 million for the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program.

Volunteers of America (VOA) Northern New England is a faith-based, community nonprofit that is a member of the Maine Affordable Housing Coalition. VOA owns, manages, and offers social services to over 500 units of affordable housing units across nine counties in Maine.

The number one issue our state is facing right now is the need for production of new affordable housing. Housing is needed by our older citizens; veterans; those working and making less than \$17 per hour; children and young families starting out; those experiencing homelessness; our minimum wage workforce. All people in Maine deserve a safe, affordable place to call home. We have a demand for thousands of new units in both rural and urban communities which is driving up housing sale prices and rent to record levels. The median home in Maine cost \$345,000 in March 2022, up from \$256,000 in 2020.

The number one barrier to addressing Maine's housing crisis is a lack of funding to build affordable housing. Long-term, sustainable investment in affordable housing programs, like the Rural Affordable Housing Program and affordable housing for aging populations, should be a top priority for Maine's economy. We are grateful to the Legislature and Governor who have appropriated millions of dollars to work building housing over the last few years. For the first time in decades, Maine is now creating a robust pipeline of affordable housing development for the near term. To continue meeting the demand, though, Maine needs to ensure long-term funding opportunities.

VOA Northern New England is focusing on our region's housing crisis and prioritizing the development of affordable housing. We are currently working on projects in Augusta, Bangor, and Waldoboro. Of the existing affordable housing we offer to older persons, the average time people remain on our wait list is approximately two years. Too many neighbors are facing struggles and it is time to bring them home! I would ask you to prioritize this funding proposal.

Thank you for your public service to Maine.

Sincerely,

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