



4/12/2023

Support for LD 1276

Senator Grohoski, Representative Perry, and honorable members of the Taxation Committee,

My name is Craig Saddle mire, and I am both a resident as well as the Development Organizer for the Raise-Op Housing Cooperative. The Raise-Op operates 15 units of affordable, mixed-income housing in Lewiston that are owned and managed by our residents. I request that you please support LD 1276, An Act to Create and Sustain Jobs and Affordable Housing through Development of Cooperatives and Employee-owned Businesses.

I believe cooperative housing can play an important role in addressing the housing needs of Maine people. Housing cooperatives allow people to pool resources - both social and economic - in order to stabilize their housing costs, increase their housing quality, promote community, and incentivize long-term stewardship of the home. While other affordable housing and public housing programs are essential to addressing the housing crisis, housing cooperatives provide a complementary alternative that leverages the private capital and human capital of the residents themselves, who share both the risk and reward of managing their own housing together.

Personally, I think the most exciting and powerful thing that housing cooperatives offer is empowerment and civic engagement. Residents learn about their homes, about finances, and about their communities through the operation of their home. They are taking information and working together to solve problems. The options are not always good, and the consequences of their decisions can sometimes be daunting, but a lot of personal growth happens through that process that can really transform a person's life. The extent to which someone likes their neighbors is not guaranteed, but most people in housing cooperatives feel very connected to their community, and very invested in the future of that community. And they feel that they can be agents of positive change both in their personal lives as well as in their neighborhood. Our own housing cooperative has helped develop community gardens, dog parks, public artwork, community spaces, and currently is supporting the development of a new childcare center.

The scale of the housing crisis is overwhelming, to say the least. An essential part of the problem is that we are losing many affordable homes as private property owners charge unaffordable rates or change the use of the home to serve a different purpose, be it business or personal. LD 1276 will create helpful tax incentives that could motivate property owners to sell their properties to their residents, and also potentially lower the cost of the sale. The conversion of properties to housing cooperatives helps to realign the private incentives of the owners with the short and long term interests of residents, allowing them a greater sense of connection to their community and greater control over their economic lives.

For these reasons, I ask that you please support LD 1276.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Craig Saddle mire". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Craig Saddle mire
Cooperative Development Organizer
Raise-Op Housing Cooperative
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