



April 13, 2023

Senator Teresa Pierce
Representative Traci Gere
Committee on Housing
Maine State Legislature
c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: Testimony in support of LD 226: An Act to Address Maine's Affordable Housing Crisis

Dear Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and Honorable Members of the Housing Committee,

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 offer this written testimony in support of LD 226.

Volunteers of America (VOA) Northern New England is a faith-based community nonprofit that works with households experiencing deep poverty, disabilities, and homelessness. We produced and manage nearly 600 units of affordable housing, and many of our housing sites are in rural towns across nine counties in Maine. We are a proud provider of quality, affordable housing for low-income older community members, veterans, and persons with disabilities.

Maine is facing a housing crisis not witnessed in generations. Many grandparents and parents worry that their children and grandchildren will never accomplish a part of the American dream – owning your own home. The median home in Maine now costs \$334,200 (March 2023), up from \$256,000 in 2020. Lack of housing supply is driving up housing prices. In February 2018 there were over 10,000 listings of homes. In February 2022 there were only 1,913. Maine is short of more than 20,000 homes for low-income people. As a result, Maine's incidence of homelessness has increased and many of our metropolitan areas are seeing rising numbers of outdoor encampments.

In response to this crisis, VOA has prioritized our agency's resources to construct and preserve affordable housing. Currently, we have plans to develop new affordable housing units for seniors, persons with disabilities, and veterans experiencing homelessness in Bangor, Waldoboro, and Augusta. As a member of the Maine Affordable Housing Coalition, we are aware that other nonprofit and private developers

have plans to produce over 2,400 homes in the next 2-3 years. We believe this is a low estimate given the fact that not every small developer was surveyed. However, our plans for the creation of new units depend on a combination of public financing, private investments, and community philanthropy.

The significant public investments of \$200 million proposed by LD226 will support Maine in reducing the tremendous gap between housing demand and housing supply. Local communities and economies would benefit from this large infusion of capital funding. Not since the 1970s has the state of Maine been poised to produce over 1,000 units of affordable housing a year. Without concerted and significant public financing, marginalized households and the next generation of Mainers may remain out of reach in securing their own housing.

Housing is the foundation of family life and a social determinant of health. Affordable housing should be prioritized by the Legislature. Thank you for considering my remarks and for your public service to Maine.

Sincerely,



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