

Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and honorable members of the Joint Select Committee on Housing: my name is Patty Kidder and I am a resident of Springvale, part of the city of Sanford. I am here today to testify in favor of LD 226: An Act to Address Maine's Affordable Housing Crisis.

I am here today to tell you housing insecurity is a very serious problem in Maine. When the Pandemic first started in 2020, Maine Peoples' Alliance started MainersTogether.com which paired volunteers with people in need and I was the volunteer coordinator for the greater Sanford area. Some of the families I helped were on the brink of eviction. Once you have an eviction on your record, it is very hard to get another apartment. The people were low-income and would qualify for a section 8 voucher except their apartments wouldn't pass inspection and some of the landlords wouldn't accept the vouchers. Mainers need more safe affordable housing.

I started trying to help a homeless couple get an affordable apartment. They had been staying in a friend's spare bedroom until the pandemic started and the friend made them leave. They had set up camp in the woods around town. I brought them food and gave them my extra camping supplies. I discovered they were not alone. There were several tent cities in the different wooded areas. At one point they found an apartment and we found help for the security deposit through my church and then it fell apart. The apartment never passed the inspection and they were homeless again.

When the people I was trying to help would get a housing voucher, you had limited time to find an apartment that would pass the inspection and a landlord who would accept the people as tenants. There were application forms to fill out and fees to scrape together and by then someone else with ready cash and great references had already signed the lease. There just isn't enough

affordable housing for low income people in my community and all over the state. Some people I have been helping, pay rent that is more than 60% of their income. They can't keep up with their other living expenses.

Our own mortgage payment is equal to 45% of my husbands disability check and we have been unable to keep up with our utility bills this winter, like many other Maine families.

All people need an affordable, safe place to live before they can work on putting their lives back together. Housing first, it works. Please vote LD 226 ought to pass. Our low-income neighbors need more affordable safe places to live and our state needs the good paying jobs this bill will provide.

Honorable members of the Joint Select Committee on Housing, thank you for your time.

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