



53 Baxter Boulevard, Suite 202 | Portland, ME 04101
Phone: 866-554-5380 | Fax: 207-775-5727 | TTY: 877-434-7598
aarp.org/me | me@aarp.org | twitter: @aarpmaine
facebook.com/aarpmaine | instagram.com/aarpme

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AARP Maine Testimony in favor of LD 709: "An Act to Support Home Share Programming for Seniors"

Greetings Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and honorable members of the Joint Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Jane Margesson and I am from the town of Windham. Today, on behalf of AARP's 200,000 Maine members, I am testifying in favor of LD 709 which will create a Home Share Program for older adults.

AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering people 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. Right here in Maine, we work to strengthen communities and advocate for what matters most to families: health security, financial stability, and personal fulfillment. On behalf of our nearly 200,000 members, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

For nearly 60 years, AARP has been fighting for older adults to be able to age in place. Yet with increases in housing-related costs, for many older adults this is becoming next to impossible. Housing costs, such as heating and cooling one's home, go up each year and Mainers, specifically those who are on a fixed income, cannot keep up.

It is expected that by 2038, more than 50 million households will be 65 and older, and many will struggle to remain in their homes as they age¹. Home Sharing provides the opportunity for individuals to remain in their homes comfortably and affordably, or in the communities of their choosing.

Not only does a HomeShare program enable individuals to better afford the cost of living in their homes, it also creates an opportunity for individuals to share household chores, create an increased sense of safety and even establish a sense of companionship.

The Vermont HomeShare Program has been matching individuals with roommates for over 40 years. Through a thorough screening process, which includes background checks and interviews, the Vermont HomeShare Program has been able to successfully match 197

¹https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/reports/files/Harvard_JCHS_State_Nations_Housing_2022.pdf



participants in 2022 alone. This resulted in an estimated \$450,000 saved in rental expenses for the HomeShare guests this past year².

Most Mainers want to remain in their homes and communities. AARP's 2021 "Home and Community Preferences Survey" reports that 77% of adults aged 50 and older want to remain in their homes as they age.³ LD 709 offers a program that will increase the supply of affordable housing immediately while supporting the needs of older residents, aged 50 and older, who may benefit from another person living in their home.

We are all aware that we are experiencing a housing crisis now and that we need to act soon. We need to look at innovative and sustainable solutions that can be implemented sooner than later. AARP Maine asks that you support LD 709.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Jane Margesson
AARP Maine Communications Director

² <https://www.homesharevermont.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Annual-Report-22WEB-v2.pdf>

³ Binette, Joanne. 2021 Home and Community Preference Survey: A National Survey of Adults Age 18-Plus. Washington, DC: AARP Research, November 2021. <https://doi.org/10.26419/res.00479.001>