

**TESTIMONY OF THE MAINE IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS COALITION (MIRC)
SUPPORTING L.D. 1540: An Act to Create the Stable Home Fund Program**

Sponsor: Representative Rebecca Millett of Cape Elizabeth
Public Hearing: Friday, April 21 at 9:00am

Dear Members of the Joint Select Committee on Housing:

My name is Tobin Williamson and I am the Advocacy Manager with the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition (MIRC), a statewide network of almost 100 member organizations working to enhance the lives of Maine's immigrant communities. MIRC works to advance systemic changes in Maine through collaborative advocacy to ensure that voices of the state's large, diverse, and growing immigrant communities are heard.

As this committee has heard throughout this year's legislative session so far, Maine has an ongoing housing crisis. As the bill language says, over 40% of Maine renters are spending more than 30% of their income on rent. Not surprisingly, to quote the bill again, "the months of January and February in 2023 saw more eviction filings for 12 renters than the previous 10 years." As federal Emergency Rental Assistance funds run out, the crisis shows no signs of slowing down.

A Stable Home Fund program would help both renters and landlords, as it will provide rental assistance from low-income existing tenants directly to landlords. With evictions at record levels, anything that would help at-risk families and individuals is a welcome development.

One of the communities that MIRC works with on a daily basis are asylum seekers, and we feel this legislation could be quite beneficial for them. As they receive their legal work authorization months after being here due to federal immigration laws, they often face an income gap as they move from receiving General Assistance to obtaining hourly or salary wages at their new places of employment. The Quality Housing Coalition's Project HOME team has found \$300 is the approximate difference between affordable and unaffordable rent for its clients, so we are hopeful this assistance will be sufficient to keep people from losing their homes.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this urgent issue.

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