

TESTIMONY OF THE WESTBROOK COMMUNITY HOUSING COALITION
SUPPORTING LD 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,

I am Liz Eisele McLellan, one of the co-chairs of the Westbrook Community Housing Coalition. We are a group of community members, faith leaders, school and city representatives, and nonprofit organizations that have been working together to address the housing crisis within Westbrook.

One of the biggest challenges that we are seeing in our community is the ability to afford the rents for existing or available housing. Families that are currently housed are struggling to pay their rent. We've seen rent prices increase beyond what low-income earners can reasonably afford to pay. With the loss of ERA funding, renters that were using that money to fill the gap between what they could afford and what they could find, are facing eviction.

The fear is palpable. Many of our residents are constantly afraid that they are one rent check away from becoming unhoused.

The Westbrook School system is seeing unhoused families becoming housed only because other families are losing their housing. This is not a sustainable path forward out of the housing crisis.

Addressing the housing crisis will take many different approaches and efforts, and the Stable Home Fund is one of those many efforts that will have a positive impact on some of our most vulnerable neighbors, and their children.

We must do what we can to work with renters and landlords to keep people in their homes. This is not a "work harder, you can pull yourself up by your bootstraps" issue. This is a culmination of inequity in housing, employment, and wages, that we have failed to address.

Helping people stay in their homes, or move into a home, provides one of life's most basic necessities. Feeling safe is important. LD 1540 and the Stable Home Fund is just one way that you can help provide that.

Thank you.

Liz Eisele McLellan,
on behalf of the Westbrook Community Housing Coalition