

# Maine Climate Action **NOW!**

To: Maine Legislature Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

From: Amy Eshoo, Maine Climate Action Now

Date: April 25, 2023

Re: LD 1074: An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Fund New Affordable Housing for Low-income Households OUGHT TO PASS

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and Honorable members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, my name is Amy Eshoo. I am a resident of North Yarmouth and Director for Maine Climate Action Now, a statewide coalition of grassroots organizations who support transformative action in response to the climate crisis. We hold social, racial, and economic justice as critical to a just and equitable transition from a fossil fuel economy to a clean energy economy.

With the housing crisis exploding across the country and here in Maine we are concerned for all Mainers who may struggle for various reasons with secure housing. According to the Maine Association of Realtors, existing home sales in Maine in 2022 dropped nearly 17.5%, but the median sales price rose 12% to \$335,000. This puts purchasing a home out of reach for many in our state even if the stock were available.

Across the state case managers and rapid housing workers are struggling to secure housing for the number of clients that are getting referred to their services. The recidivism rate for our unhoused population and the rate at which social workers leave the field is skyrocketing due to our lack of housing stock. Currently it would cost the state of Maine \$150M annually to provide enough housing stock for everyone in need.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs<sup>1</sup> shows that one of the most basic needs is shelter. Housing is our primary means of survival and our single most important asset to ensure we live healthy productive lives. The state of Maine has had a housing crisis for a long time with an increased number of people moving to our state for various reasons. The problem of securing affordable housing has become not only an issue for Mainers experiencing chronic homelessness but also for our working class Mainers. Unless Mainers can meet their basic needs we will not be able to thrive, work together, and combat the climate crisis.

MCAN supports LD 1074 as the authorization of \$100,000,000 in bonds designated for the Maine State Housing Authority to build new affordable housing for low-income households is crucial to providing homes for our state's working families and those in need. Construction of new structures and adaptive reuse of existing structures for affordable housing will relieve the

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<sup>1</sup> Psychology Today (Neel Burton MD) revised October 21, 2022:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hide-and-peek/201205/our-hierarchy-needs>

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stress on Mainers without adequate housing and relieve some of the burden on the growing unhoused community.

Also of concern to us in our fight for climate justice is that newly constructed affordable housing, or the reuse of existing structures, be built or retrofitted to meet net zero greenhouse gas emissions in an effort to meet our needs to reduce resource consumption. We feel this should be added to the bill.

We urge you to vote OUGHT TO PASS for LD 1074. Thank you.

Amy Eshoo  
Maine Climate Action Now  
LD 1074

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