



Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network

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Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and distinguished members of the Joint Select Committee on Housing:

My name is Jane Makela, and I am a resident of Falmouth. I am submitting this testimony in support of LD 1710 on behalf of the Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network (MUUSAN), which links Maine's 26 UU congregations in faith-based advocacy. Recognizing the inherent worth and dignity of every human being, we as Unitarian Universalists hold that access to affordable, habitable housing is a fundamental right in a just society.

Mainers of all income levels are struggling to find housing that fits their budgets or to meet dramatic increases in the rents on their existing residences. But this scarcity of housing falls especially hard on those whose incomes put even so-called "affordable housing" out of reach and who must resort to seeking public assistance or available housing vouchers --if they can even find a landlord willing to accept such vouchers. Too many find themselves in the downward spiral of eviction and long-term homelessness.

The solution proposed by LD 1710 seems a creative and financially sensible one, creating a state-run rental assistance program that reduces the stress on municipal General Assistance programs that now devote more than 90% of their payments to housing expenses of those at risk of homelessness. And this boost to the General Assistance program is accomplished *not* with Mainers' income tax dollars but through a modest increase on the tax on high-end real estate sales.

But just as significantly, this solution recognizes the moral obligation we have as a society to ensure that as we grow our state and its economy, building our businesses and taking care of our families through the resources and opportunities we find here in Maine, no one is left behind for lack of the basic necessities for living with dignity, including an affordable, habitable place to call home.

LD 1710 will help put safe, decent and affordable housing within reach of many more Mainers, enabling them to remain in and thrive in our communities. We urge you to vote for its passage.