

Amy Jane Larkin
Arundel

Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and honorable members of the Housing Committee: my name is Amy Larkin, I live in Arundel, and I'm writing to you today to testify in favor of LD 1710.

I am testifying because I know housing is an issue that affects all of us. That's a broad statement, but it's true. When folks struggle with housing, it's like a wave with ripples being felt throughout the community. Many years ago, my grandmother helped to start monthly free meals and a free Christmas Day dinner in Kennebunk with a group called Community Harvest. They also give Community Supported Agriculture, or CSA, memberships to low income folks in our area, provide heating assistance, and give emergency grants. As housing costs and inflation rise, this organization has seen increased need for every aspect of their offerings. And they're not alone. Food pantries are in high demand. Teachers and schools are struggling to help their students who deal with housing challenges, face eviction, or live unhoused. Small businesses can't find workers because folks can't afford rent nearby. Healthcare, childcare, and eldercare all suffer from the same issue, and big businesses can't get folks to move from out of state because there's nowhere for new workers to live.

By not addressing housing issues at a state level, we are shifting the burden to our towns, to our communities, to our nonprofits, and to individual Mainers. And how long can we keep that up? I volunteer for a three town committee and we just held a forum on housing. We heard from two community members working directly with folks with low income that they're so busy dealing with crisis situations that they can't take proactive steps to help folks. Let's be proactive. Let's do everything we can to keep our neighbors in their homes and ensure housing for as many Mainers as possible.

We need rent relief in Maine and that's one way to keep folks in their homes. 52% of extremely low-income households in our state are paying more than 50% of their monthly income towards rent. That is not sustainable. We must do what we can to ensure folks can pay their rent and keep their current housing situation if they have one.. Stable housing is key to our mental and physical well being, ability to get and keep employment, and fundamental to a thriving community. Housing truly is an issue that touches all of us and I hope you'll support LD 1710. Thank you so much for your time on this important issue and for listening.

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