



An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds, and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2023, June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025

Testimony in Support of the Proposed Initiative Related to the Affordable Homeownership and Rental Development Programs.

May 18, 2023

Senators Rotundo, Representatives Sachs, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriation and Financial Affairs (AFA); my name is Ninette Irabaruta, Director of Public Policy and Advocacy at United Way of Southern Maine (UWSM). I am submitting this written testimony on behalf of UWSM in support of LD 258's proposed allocation of \$80 million to the Maine Housing Authority with \$35 million for the Rural Rental Assistance Program; \$35 million for the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program; and \$10 million for Innovative Affordable Housing Development Strategies.

United Way of Southern Maine (UWSM) mobilizes the caring power of community by bringing people and resources together to address immediate needs and find long-term solutions to the challenging problems of our times. And one of our most challenging problems today is housing across the State of Maine.

This new proposed investment would be used to build affordable homes.

Maine is not immune to the issue of housing that we are seeing at the national level; research shows that Maine is short 20,000 units of affordable housing for the most vulnerable populations in our communities.

Maine needs more affordable housing in order to be competitive in the regional, national, and global markets. Housing is a workforce development issue, and Maine not only needs enough housing for our vulnerable populations, but it also needs to support the workforce so that Maine can boost its economy.

Maine's population is growing, with more and more people choosing to move to Maine, to work and raise their families here. Others are moving back to support their aging family members. We longer cannot ignore the issue of housing in our state. Housing is an important solution that could help with workforce, homelessness, child care, transportation, and more.

United Way of Southern Maine encourages you to support this new addition of \$80 million so that we can continue to be ready for our growing population economically and socially. Let's be an example in the country and lead this effort of making sure those in need are taken care of while we also invest in our economy so that we can continue to compete in the global market.

Thank you for your leadership and service.