

## Economic & Community Development

November 27, 2023

Dear Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and Honorable Members of the Housing Committee:

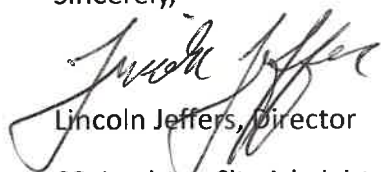
Raise-Op Housing Cooperative has been working to provide well managed, affordable housing options in Lewiston since 2008. Not only has their mission served to provide over 33 safe, well managed, affordable units to residents of varying income levels and accessibility needs, they have provided units with cooperative ownership to members as well as units available for tenants with cooperative management practices. Raise-Op has demonstrated how best to provide a diversity of cooperative housing types in an urban setting that help provide stability and economic mobility for Lewiston residents.

LD 1505 is an opportunity to strengthen cooperative housing models as one tool to support the housing crisis here in Maine. Through the valuable work and experience Raise-Op offers, they have identified significant limitations within existing Maine Statutes that has delayed cooperatives access to important financial resources as well as limited residents' access to critical housing programs like LIHEAP and Emergency Rental Assistance.

The unique opportunity of ownership through a multifamily rental situation provides an opportunity for all residents to build financial stability as well as manage the building they call home. However, cooperatives operate in a grey area between ownership and rental units. We have experienced the unintended challenges this lack of clarity can cause with housing programs administered at the State and Federal level. Clarifying the types of housing cooperatives operating in Maine - and clearly defining each one as "ownership" or "rental" - will help in the administration of important housing programs, where the policy to address cooperatives is often not present."

Cooperatives offer a valuable solution to helping Maine residents access housing and economic stability. Ensuring clarity over definitions of classifying cooperatives will ensure access to proper resources as well as remove unintended barriers to the creation of more affordable units to help address Maine's Housing crisis. Lewiston has experienced the value of cooperative housing models here in the community and the important role they play in our housing stock. **The City of Lewiston urges your support in adopting LD 1505** to clarify cooperative housing models and remove unintended barriers to housing resources for cooperative housing residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lincoln Jeffers". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "L".

Lincoln Jeffers, Director

CC: Lewiston City Administrator Heather Hunter  
Senator Margaret Rotundo  
Representative Margaret Craven  
Representative Kristen Cloutier  
Representative Mana Abdi  
Representative Michel Lajoie