

Heather Allen
Harpswell
LD 1893

I am writing to oppose LD 1893, 'An Act to allow a Municipality to Impose a Fee on Short-term Rentals for the Benefit of that Municipality'. My small family business, Your Island Connection based in Harpswell, has been in business for 33 years offering private family homes for weekly rentals! What is happening to our industry is now complicated because of COVID-19 and record numbers of people moving to Maine.

Yes, people have loved working from home and getting out of the big cities, but that is not the fault of vacation rentals and we should not be the scapegoat for it. Tourism lodging brought in over \$1 Billion in lodging/sales tax in 2022 (according to the Maine Office of Tourism).

The tax rate of 9% is competitive with other New England States. Guests who are paying this 9% are contributing to our economy in many ways beyond the \$1 Billion of lodging tax. They shop, eat, and recreate while they are here. They provide jobs for at least 150,000 people annually. If we continue to increase costs for visitors it will most certainly hurt our vibrant industry.

I am speaking up along with hotel operators and real estate professionals who understand how important this 100-year-old industry is to Maine's economy and the livelihood of thousands who live here. Vacation rentals are in demand and will continue to be. If guests can't find them here in Maine, they will go elsewhere which will hurt our economy

Too many towns are trying to ban or severely limit vacation rentals blaming them for the lack of affordable housing. Is a \$1 Million home on the ocean affordable housing? People moving to Maine and buying "affordable" properties to live in have helped create this problem, not vacation rentals. People appreciate all that Maine offers and they want to be here too. Please exercise caution and vote no. This bill, LD 1893, has no limit to what a municipality can charge, nor is it necessary. I am certain hundreds of property owners and managers agree with me. Perhaps if all rental properties had local managers 90% of all complaints could be solved. I welcome your comments and I can be available to discuss this and anything to do with vacation rentals and STRs going forward.