

**TESTIMONY BY THE MAINE IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS COALITION
IN SUPPORT OF L.D. 2106: An Act to Accelerate the Production of Affordable
Housing and
Strengthen the Historic Property Rehabilitation Tax Credit**

Sponsor: Sen. Margaret Rotundo
Public Hearing: Wednesday, January 24, 2024, at 1:30 pm

Dear Members of the Taxation Committee,

We are writing on behalf of the board and members of the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition (MIRC), a coalition of more than 100 member organizations with a commitment to advancing and defending the rights of immigrants. Our mission is to improve the legal, social, and economic conditions experienced by Maine's immigrants – enhancing their lives while strengthening Maine – through advocacy, information sharing, and collaboration both through and among our member organizations. We actively prioritize the voices, perspectives, and decision-making of New Mainer communities as we acknowledge the status quo of systems that consistently disadvantage them. MIRC envisions policies that will not exacerbate inequities across BIPOC groups, including divisions across country of origin, socioeconomic status, state geography, language, and immigration status.

When we talk to our communities, neighbors, and friends, it seems that we can all agree that finding housing is extremely difficult. From needing what feels like 100 different references to being priced out of the areas they live in, finding a place to live in has never been harder. LD 2106 has opened and will continue to open doors to many looking for a place to live. The issue of housing affordability is not a race issue but a statewide issue, and it is why MIRC joins our partners at the Maine Affordable Housing Coalition in urging you to pass this bill.

This brings us to the heart of the matter – the need for more housing. One of the ways we can address the historic housing crisis our state is facing is through the construction of more housing. LD 2106 paves the way for certified historic property rehabilitation projects to more aptly meet the reality of our current housing market. Compared to 2008, Maine construction costs have more than doubled, making the current \$5 million cap on the credit no longer hold the same purchasing power it did in 2008. LD 2106 addresses this discrepancy by increasing the cap to \$10 million. This adjustment aligns with the economic realities of today, bringing the purchasing power closer to its original intent. It is crucial for the rehabilitation of historic buildings in communities like Lewiston, Biddeford, Sanford, and many others across the state.

In response to a pressing need for housing for pregnant or recently pregnant mothers who would have nowhere to go once discharged from the hospital, organizations like In Her Presence have repurposed historic buildings to meet these needs.¹ The Frances Warde Nursing Home in Portland, for example, was transformed to provide the wrap-around services these new moms require.

At the end of the day, the housing crisis will continue to affect Mainers as a whole, but legislation like LD 2106 aims to help Maine take the steps it needs to address this crisis. That is why we at MIRC support this bill and strongly urge the members of the Taxation Committee to support and approve LD 2106.

¹ In Her Presence, "Frances Warde," November 27, 2023, <https://inherpresence.org/our-work/frances-warde/>.

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