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Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the Joint Select Committee on Housing: my name is Rachael Haskell, and I live in Portland, Maine.

I have lived here my entire life, but unfortunately, I have not been able to afford a place of my own in my hometown city. I am 23 years old, and I work three jobs in addition to being a full time graduate student and doing an internship as part of my program, yet I cannot afford Portland rents. I am lucky enough to be able to live with my parents, but this is not a luxury that all Mainers have. Many do not have the same support I have, but everyone deserves a place to live. Safe, affordable housing is a human right, and we owe it to our Maine residents to uphold this right through whatever means are available.

Rental assistance is one such tool—it can provide stability to families and help them to be able to stay in the Maine communities they love but may be struggling to afford, as currently very low income households are facing eviction and homelessness. I urge you to support rental assistance in full to ensure Mainers have safe, affordable housing in their communities and to target this assistance particularly to low income Mainers that are most in need of the stability. I hope someday to be able to afford a place to call home in the city I have called such my entire life—rental assistance is a step towards that dream for me and for countless other Maine residents.