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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 Gina Morin and I live in Auburn.

I am here today to ask this committee to fund housing assistance in the supplemental budget.

All Mainers deserve safe, affordable and efficient housing. Households are experiencing astronomical rent prices and it's gotten so bad that most units classified as affordable are still way beyond reach. That puts the extremely low income families at a much greater risk of eviction, homelessness and housing instability.

I know what housing insecurity feels like, and it's not something I'd wish on anyone. In 2016, I was forced out of my home and lived in my car for 10 days. My life was instantly thrown into chaos. Being unhoused and forgotten by society was a gut punch. I felt so much shame, as though I'd done something wrong, when all I'd done was try to live on the income available to me.

After receiving my monthly disability money, I rented a motel room where I lived for over 4 years. I could pay month-to-month for that room, but I couldn't save enough to rent a new place.

My story took a lucky turn: I became active in a community organization, and the connections I formed led to the offer of an apartment to rent. Having a place to call home means that, even with a mental illness, I no longer need therapy. That stability is everything. I also know that if my landlord sold our building and the rent went up several hundreds of dollars—something that is happening regularly in my community—I'd be right back where I started.

Like I said, I got lucky one time. But we all know Maine is in a housing crisis, and renters are bearing the brunt. And, If action is not taken in time, I'm concerned about what may happen.

I urge you to fully fund rental assistance because there is no place in Maine where the median income renter can afford the median rent. Further, I urge you to target that rental assistance to low income households. Thank you.