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Dear honorable members of the Joint Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs:

My name is Jim Lysen. I have lived in Lewiston, Maine for 40 years and am a member of Maine People's Alliance.

Mainers need Rent Relief now! In Lewiston we had a series of Community Conversations on housing where attendees (over twenty each night) agreed that the "Rents are too damn high!" Later that became: "The rents are STILL too damn high!"

While we appreciate efforts from the Administration to fund new housing, especially using the "Housing First!" model, it does not help currently struggling renters to pay their rents today. Most Maine renters pay more than 30% of their income for housing. That is not right! Rent Relief can help these people and reduce evictions while new housing is being built.

Rent Relief would be Statewide, even rural areas. So No One is forced out of their community because they cannot pay their rent.

In this budget, hopefully a moral document, where is help for renters with very low income? Like people with disabilities; older Mainers like me, with a fixed income; veterans; students; low-wage workers; and single-parents, also like me. It is missing!

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I would be willing to try to answer any questions you may have. Thanks again!

Jim Lysen