

131st Legislature

Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the Joint Select Committee on Housing

Testimony of Amanda Bartlett, Developers Collaborative, February 23, 2024, in favor of the Supplemental Budget LD2214

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs; and Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and members of the Joint Select Committee on Housing. My name is Amanda Bartlett, and I am here today representing Developers Collaborative, a Portland-based real-estate development company and leader in affordable housing development across Maine.

Many in this room are likely familiar with the work of DC's owner, Kevin Bunker, but whether you have had the opportunity to work with Kevin or anyone else on the DC team, you know that we hold true to Maine values; We make good on our promises, genuinely care about community and like any good neighbor, we're there to help if you give us a call. That is why I am here today. We believe in the transformational impact of affordable housing as a catalyst in not only the human condition, but equally so for neighborhoods and the Maine economy. As we stand in the throes of a housing crisis, we have the experience to know what solutions work and how to help. To that end, we have been able to provide best-in-class housing development across Maine in both rural and urban areas, addressing needs as unique as each Maine community we serve and work in. We could do more, but there simply isn't enough funding to meet the need.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of the Supplemental Budget lines Part GG that allocate \$10M to MaineHousing for Affordable Homeownership and Part HH that allocates \$16M to MaineHousing for the Emergency Housing Relief Fund program.

Through our work at DC, what we have come to see first-hand is that the housing crisis we are faced with today isn't solved by one type of development but rather a continuum of housing types and solutions to meet every Mainer where their individual need is. Over the years in affordable housing development, we have answered the call beyond apartment production to ensure we deliver housing in a way that comprehensively meets diverse and complex needs across the entire housing continuum from homeless shelters to permanent housing. Just in the last year, we completed construction of the new Portland Homeless Service Center, a second homeless shelter, transitional housing, and several permanent housing communities in both urban and rural parts of our state.

To provide funding that comprehensively meets the housing need across the continuum I have described and, in the size, and scale appropriate for towns both small and large, we ask that you please allocate an additional \$20 million in housing funding split between the State Low Income Housing Tax Credit and the Rural Affordable Rental Housing program. This additional amount would come from the \$100 million unallocated portion of the Supplemental Budget. As I stand here today, we have four unfunded projects at DC that could be made possible by this increase in funding. This would result in around 120 units of new affordable housing spread across towns in four Maine counties.

The housing crisis is here now, and Maine people can't wait. Thank you for listening.