

Honorable committee members: My name is Pat Schwebler, and I am testifying in support of LD 255, An Act to support Mobile Home Residents in Purchasing Their Mobile Home Parks. I work for the Cooperative Development Institute and am the Co program director of the New England Resident-Owned Community program.

CDI has recently assisted two Maine communities that were able to purchase their park and become resident-owned because of the money placed in the budget by the governor. The Blueberry Fields cooperative in Brunswick, Maine, became resident-owned in October of 2024. There are 277 households with the opportunity for 15 additional homes that should be coming online in the next year or so in that community. Cedar Falls, located in Bangor, Maine, just became resident-owned a month ago; 129 homes are preserved forever, with 81 new homes eventually coming online. This additional infill project is done in partnership with Bangor Housing and Maine Housing. We are currently working with a 40-unit park in Monmouth, Maine that we anticipate will close in May of this year. This represents almost 600 affordable housing units since the preservation fund's original creation.

This type of funding helps to create a soft landing on the rent increases for the community and provides a predictable multi-year financial plan that the membership votes on. It allows residents in these communities to go up against the equity players who come into Maine with one goal: to make a profit for themselves. This often comes at the expense of stable rents, properly maintained infrastructure and quality resident services. These are not your mom-and-pop operators who take pride in ownership. A resident-owned community, by comparison, is motivated by affordability, sustainability, and the opportunity to create a true community.

A priceless benefit of the work is helping residents become a community. Neighbors pull together, knock on doors, and converse with neighbors they haven't met before. One of the joys in this work is observing that and having members relay stories of getting to know their neighbors, making new friends,

and creating a social "in-person network" where new relationships are built. Neighbors begin to help each other through that connection.

The latest Maine housing report states Maine needs over 80,000 units of housing. Due to this and increasing real estate prices, interest rates, and the desire of Capital Equity to continue to invest in Maine and then gouge the residents with unsustainable rental increases, I respectfully ask that you support this bill.

Thank you for your time today and thank you for your service to the people of Maine.

Pat Schwebler

Co-Program Director

New England Resident Owned Communities

Cooperative Development Institute

Pat Schwebler
Kennebunk
LD 255

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