

Subject: Support for LD 1080 An Act Prohibiting Public Utilities from Requiring Deposits Based Solely on a Residential Customer's Income

Chairman Lawrence, Senator Grohoski, Senator Harrington, and Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee,

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to express my strong support for LD 1080 An Act Prohibiting Public Utilities from Requiring Deposits Based Solely on a Residential Customer's Income. As we work towards fostering a more equitable society, it is crucial that we recognize the financial challenges faced by low-income individuals and ensure that they are not unfairly burdened by excessive upfront costs.

Many low-income individuals and families are already struggling to make ends meet, balancing the costs of food, healthcare, transportation, and other basic needs. The burden of large security deposits—whether for rental housing, utility services, or even required deposits for essential goods and services—can make it even harder for these individuals to access stable housing or utilities, or to engage in other necessary life activities. By limiting such deposits, we can offer a more level playing field and help reduce the financial strain that perpetuates the cycle of poverty.

Here are some reasons why limiting deposits is an essential policy for low-income individuals:

1. **Improving Housing Stability:** Excessive security deposits often prevent low-income individuals from securing stable housing. For many, saving enough money for a security deposit can take months or even years, delaying their ability to move into safer, more stable living conditions. By limiting deposits on essential services, we make it easier for individuals to secure housing, which is a critical step towards achieving long-term stability.
2. **Reducing the Risk of Exploitation:** Some landlords, utility companies, and service providers take advantage of low-income individuals by imposing excessively high deposits. Limiting these deposits helps curb predatory practices and ensures that low-income individuals are treated fairly and equitably, without being penalized for their financial situation.
3. **Supporting Economic Mobility:** Excessive deposits hinder the ability of low-income individuals to invest in their futures, such as through education, job training, or even savings. By reducing the burden of upfront deposits, we can free up more resources for personal development, helping individuals achieve long-term financial independence and stability.

4. Building a More Equitable Society: The financial strain caused by large deposits only deepens the economic divide, creating barriers that are difficult to overcome. By instituting deposit limitations, we can promote greater equity and help ensure that all individuals, regardless of their financial background, have a fair opportunity to succeed and thrive. When individuals do not have the ability to pay a large deposit and needs to move, a family could have DHHS called for not having basic utilities. By preventing the need for a deposit, it helps keep Maine families together.

I urge you to support LD 1080 An Act Prohibiting Public Utilities from Requiring Deposits Based Solely on a Residential Customer's Income. This would have a lasting positive impact on reducing financial hardship, increasing stability, and ensuring that all individuals have access to the services and housing they need to build better lives. This would assist with improving the lives of Mainers.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue. I appreciate your commitment to fostering a more inclusive, just, and compassionate society.

Sincerely,

Reverend Brooklin Jones-Banahan, LCSW