

Testimony in Support of LD 1082

An Act to Invest in Maine's Families and Workforce by Amending the Real Estate Transfer Tax

Sponsor: Speaker of the House Fecteau

Public Hearing: April 3rd, 2025 1:00 PM

Senator Grohoski, Representative Cloutier, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Taxation,

My name is Ruben Torres, and I serve as the Advocacy, Communications, and Policy Manager for the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition (MIRC). MIRC represents over 100 member organizations statewide, working to improve the economic and social standing of immigrants in Maine and, in turn, strengthen the state as a whole. We urge the Committee to support LD 1082, which creates a sustainable, long-term funding source for affordable housing by amending the Real Estate Transfer Tax.

The availability of affordable housing is one of the most pressing challenges facing Maine's immigrant and refugee communities. Many of Maine's immigrants are essential workers in industries like healthcare, hospitality, and manufacturing—sectors already experiencing severe workforce shortages. However, the housing crisis is not just an immigrant issue; it is an issue that affects all Mainers. Whether you are a young professional trying to buy your first home, a senior on a fixed income, or a local business struggling to attract workers, the lack of affordable housing limits opportunity and economic growth for everyone in our state.

LD 1082 represents a proactive and responsible approach to addressing this crisis. Without continued investment, crucial programs such as the Rural Rental and Affordable Home Ownership programs will lack the funding needed to move shovel-ready projects forward. This is not just about ensuring new Mainers have a place to live—it is about ensuring Maine's economy can grow, businesses can find workers, and families of all backgrounds can thrive.

LD 1082 will provide dedicated funding for several critical programs, including:

- The Housing First Fund, which aims to end chronic homelessness—a crisis that disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, including asylum seekers and low-income Mainers;
- The Housing Opportunities for Maine (HOME) Fund, which finances home repairs, rental assistance, and shelter operations for those struggling to find stable housing;
- A new Housing Production Fund to support the construction of much-needed multi-family and single-family homes, expanding options for all Maine residents.

Additionally, the bill eliminates the Real Estate Transfer Tax for first-time and low-income homebuyers utilizing MaineHousing's Advantage Program and First Generation Program. This is a crucial step in making homeownership more accessible to working-class families who are the backbone of our communities. However, we encourage additional outreach efforts to ensure immigrant and historically underserved communities can access these opportunities.

Maine cannot afford to wait to address its housing crisis. With a 2% vacancy rate and home prices rising more than 50% since 2020, the current market is unsustainable. Every Mainer—regardless of where they come from—deserves a stable, affordable place to call

home. LD 1082 is a step towards ensuring that our state remains a place where families can put down roots, businesses can grow, and communities can thrive.

For these reasons, the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition urges the Committee to support LD 1082 and ensure that our state's housing policies reflect the needs of all communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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Contact:

Ruben Torres

Advocacy, Communications, and Policy Manager, Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition

rtorres@maineimmigrantrights.org