



4/9/2025

*Support for LD 690, An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Provide Funding
for Affordable and Low-income Housing Programs*

Dear Sen. Rotundo, Rep. Gattine, and members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee,

My name is Craig Saddlemire, and I am the Development Organizer for the Raise-Op Housing Cooperative in Lewiston, Maine. We own 5 apartment buildings, home to 33 different households, and 90 residents, a majority of whom are low-income, and some of whom are formerly homeless.

Maine is under extreme pressure to provide housing that is safe and affordable for all Maine people. More housing is the solution to many of Maine's challenges. In recent years, investments in building affordable housing have been made, but these are only one-time funds. We are decades behind and have a growing need for housing. Without additional funding, the construction of affordable homes will dramatically decrease.

This year, Maine commissioned HR&A to develop a roadmap to meet its need to build 80,000 new homes by 2030. Providing funding was one of HR&A's priority recommendations.

As you consider LD 690 and the proportion of funding allocations to various housing models, I request that you consider a new funding category for shared-equity housing, which would include such housing models as land trusts and cooperative housing. While new rental housing and single-family homeownership development is critical to growing our housing supply, shared-equity housing has the potential to activate residents, leverage new capital sources, and support community-based developers in a way that is not taking place currently.

The Rural Development Loan Program is a great example of how this activation is taking place in rural communities for small developers of rental housing. A similar program that is available statewide and designed specifically for shared-equity housing could have a similarly positive impact in a growing housing sector. While MaineHousing has made great strides to properly recognize and categorize such models as cooperative housing in the application process for their existing programs, such programs do not necessarily allow cooperative housing and similar shared-equity programs to truly flourish in the manner that recognizes their unique qualities.

Shared-equity housing is a community-based model of housing development that is resident-led, responsive to resident need, and shares the social and economic benefits of a development with residents and the local community. In order to meet our housing demand, we need to expand capacity beyond the handful of highly skilled large-scale developers that exist in Maine. We need to empower grassroots community leaders to join the field of housing development and help build our future.



Such a program would ideally be administered by MaineHousing, but to the extent MaineHousing may not have the staff capacity to administer a new shared-equity housing program, the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development would be a reasonable alternative. This is especially true given that the measurement of the benefits of shared-equity housing go beyond standard housing metrics, and include broader economic and social benefits to a community. For example, our own organization not only has been able to provide housing to our residents, but also have supported them in starting their own businesses, childcare centers, community gardens, and play leadership roles in neighborhood development activities, including the successful planning and award of HUD's Choice Neighborhood Grant, which is creating over 180 units of new subsidized, affordable, and market rate housing in our community.

Thank you for considering this requested amendment, and please move LD 690 ought to pass.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Craig Saddleire". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Craig Saddleire

Cooperative Development Organizer

Raise-Op Housing Cooperative