

Jonah Fertig-Burd
DURHAM
LD 1287

Distinguished Chairperson Curry, Representative Gere, and esteemed committee members, I appreciate the opportunity to address you today regarding LD 1287. My name is Jonah Fertig-Burd and I live in Durham. I am farmer and a small business owner,

As a concerned resident invested in our state's future prosperity, I stand before you advocating for this essential legislation that addresses the critical connection between housing accessibility and economic vitality in Maine. This bill represents a forward-thinking approach to tackling two interconnected challenges that threaten our communities: workforce shortages and housing insecurity.

Our state faces unprecedented demographic and economic pressures affecting our labor market. Maine experienced a significant workforce contraction during recent years, with approximately 26,000 workers leaving the labor pool during the pandemic. Despite partial recovery, we confront an aging workforce, with retirement-age residents outnumbering younger workers entering the job market. These structural challenges require innovative solutions that both attract new talent to Maine and enable current residents to remain productive members of our economy. Housing instability undermines these efforts, creating barriers to steady employment and community investment.

LD 1287's establishment of dedicated housing stability resources represents a strategic investment in Maine's economic foundation. By preventing displacement and homelessness, this program will generate measurable returns across multiple sectors. Employers will benefit from a more reliable workforce pipeline, while families will gain the security needed to focus on career advancement and community engagement. This approach acknowledges the fundamental reality that housing security is not merely a social service concern but an economic development imperative. Maine's tradition of community-centered problem-solving is embodied in this legislation, which recognizes that our collective prosperity depends on ensuring basic needs are met for all residents.

I respectfully encourage this committee to advance LD 1287 as a prudent and necessary measure that will yield substantial returns on investment. By addressing housing instability proactively, we avoid the substantially higher costs associated with responding to homelessness through emergency services, healthcare interventions, and lost productivity. This legislation represents sound fiscal policy paired with compassionate community values. Supporting stable housing today strengthens Maine's workforce, economic competitiveness, and community resilience for decades to come. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this vital initiative that will benefit all Maine communities.