

Jonathan Kenerson
LEVANT
LD 1534

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April 25, 2025

Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development

RE: Opposition to LD 1534 – An Act Enabling Municipalities to Protect Tenants and Stabilize Rents

Dear Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jonathan Kenerson, and I am a resident of Levant, Maine. I write today to express my strong opposition to LD 1534. I am a farmer and a small-scale landlord, owning and managing five properties that house 17 rental units - about 25 tenants who are friends and neighbors. This rental business is not a corporation or a large operation—it's my retirement investment and a livelihood I've built with care, responsiveness to tenant's needs, and commitment to my community.

While I support efforts to ensure fair housing for all, LD 1534 would introduce sweeping changes that unfairly burden small landlords like myself and ultimately harm both tenants and the housing market at large.

1. Loss of No-Cause Eviction Tools Harms Housing Quality and Safety

Removing the ability to issue no-cause evictions ties the hands of responsible landlords when it comes to addressing problematic tenants. I have encountered tenants who fail to pay rent, attempt to take advantage of me and their neighbors, and are unresponsive to appeals to common decency. Without a straightforward way to end these tenancies, I may be forced to retain individuals who jeopardize the well-being of other tenants. In small towns like Levant, this not only drives out good renters—it discourages landlords from staying in business altogether.

2. Increased Bureaucracy and Confusion

Requiring municipalities to file annual reports and allowing local governments to create their own eviction and rent control policies introduces layers of bureaucracy and legal inconsistency. As a small business owner who also works a farm, I cannot afford to hire lawyers to navigate a patchwork of local rules. This bill creates a system only the largest landlords can manage, leaving small operators to drown in red tape or exit the market. These small operators are most likely to be the ones tenants love best.

3. Harm to Property Values and New Housing Supply

In places where similar rent stabilization laws have passed—like Portland—property values for multi-unit buildings have plummeted. This discourages investment and makes financing new construction difficult. Maine needs more housing, not less. This bill sends a chilling message to current and prospective housing providers: your investment is not secure. This will reduce rental housing investments and hurt those who are most vulnerable - those in need of low income housing.

4. Rental Market Already Stabilizing Organically

In my experience, the market is already adjusting. I've had to lower rents and offer incentives to attract tenants in recent months. Artificial controls would freeze this natural market correction and reduce turnover, making it harder for new families and young workers to find housing.

5. Unintended Financial Consequences

Rent caps will decrease the value of my properties, which means towns will collect less in property taxes. That shortfall will likely be made up by taxing single-family homeowners—many of whom are elderly or low-income. Meanwhile, small landlords like myself, who don't have deep reserves or corporate backing, will struggle to cover maintenance, rising insurance, and property taxes under mandated rent caps. This will

reduce the quality of housing available and harm tenants in the long run.

In conclusion, LD 1534 may have good intentions, but its effects would be deeply damaging to the very communities it seeks to protect. I urge you to vote against this bill and instead support policies that encourage housing development, reduce regulatory burdens, and maintain a fair and consistent statewide framework.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Kenerson

Small Business Owner & Farmer

Levant, Maine