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55 Portland Street
Portland, ME 04101
207.775.0026
info@preblestreet.org
www.preblestreet.org



Good morning, Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and Members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee,

My name is Julie Orrego, and I am the Advocacy Supervisor at Preble Street. Preble Street's mission is to provide accessible, barrier-free services to empower people experiencing problems with homelessness, housing, hunger, and poverty and advocate for solutions to these problems. Preble Street operates 16 programs throughout Maine, and its staff works daily alongside hundreds of individuals and families who struggle with housing insecurity.

Preble Street supports LD 1522, An Act to Establish the Maine Eviction Prevention Program. This bill will provide much-needed rental assistance and stability to Maine residents at risk of eviction.

The Maine Eviction Prevention Program (EPP) helps individuals struggling to pay rent due to financial hardships. According to [Maine Equal Justice](#), almost 5,000 Maine households faced the possibility of eviction during the length of this pilot program. LD 1522 would help prevent loss of housing by prioritizing those receiving eviction notices or spending more than 30% of their income on rent. By setting [eligibility criteria](#) based on income levels and family size, this program ensures that the most vulnerable residents of our state, especially those earning under 60% of the area's median income, are supported during Maine's housing crisis.

Eviction has long-term consequences, not only for individuals and families but for the broader community. It can lead to homelessness, instability, job loss, and difficulty finding future housing. This program helps people maintain stable housing and reduces the strain on our emergency services, shelters, and healthcare systems by preventing evictions before they happen.

Keeping people housed is far less expensive than paying for shelters. The EPP provides up to \$800 monthly rent relief and a one-time payment to help cover back rent. In contrast, MaineHousing estimates the average monthly shelter bed cost is \$3,776. It is significantly less expensive to keep people housed through eviction prevention than to support them in a homeless shelter.

According to the [Quality Housing Coalition](#), when the eviction relief pilot program was launched in 2024, 1,200 applications were received from all 16 counties. Most applications came from Cumberland, Penobscot, Androscoggin, and York counties. These numbers indicate the statewide need for this eviction relief.

The funding allocated for this program—\$25 million for the next two years—will keep people housed and prevent homelessness, which is essential for the

50 years of turning hunger and homelessness into opportunity and hope

well-being of our communities and economy. The current pilot version of this program is expected to keep 1,600 households safely housed, an incredible number of households demonstrating the need to continue with this pilot. [75% of the households](#) that utilized the EPP earned less than \$31,00 a year.

As we face the challenges of an affordable housing crisis, we believe the Maine Eviction Prevention Program is a viable solution to prevent homelessness. LD 1522 provides immediate relief to those who need it most while helping to prevent further homelessness and housing instability.

Thank you for your time and consideration

