

Hi all,

My name is Emma Lombardo and I am a resident of Cumberland County.

I am here today in support of LD 1522 to establish the Maine Eviction Prevention Program, both as someone who cares for the future of housing in Maine but also as a current program specialist on the Eviction Prevention Program team.

As Mainers, I think we can all bear witness to the rising cost of living and its impact on our everyday lives. The Eviction Prevention Program was designed to support low income households and help keep more Mainers housed. Who we have been able to support reveals just how familiar the current housing crisis is.

We receive applications online, by email, mail, over the phone. We are incredibly grateful to the local community action programs and case management services who have provided additional support for their clients to apply as well. A case manager from Penobscot county reached out to the program email to submit an application for her client. This applicant was a single middle-aged woman in Penobscot county living off of social security and food stamps. She had already been to court for an eviction but had come to a payment agreement with her landlord, still with a significant balance to pay off. With the help of her case manager, we were able to procure all of the documentation we needed to approve her application, clearing her tenant balance and the eviction, and scheduling an initial 6 months of rental assistance payments.

Little did I know I would be opening up the application of that case manager just a few days later. As a single mom of 5, she works a full time job supporting clients facing varying socio-economic barriers, some of which she is facing herself. Just as we were able to approve her client's application, so did we also get to approve hers.

I share this scenario not only to highlight the importance of community organizations and the people who work endlessly to ensure they continue to exist, but also to call attention to the familiar reality of evictions and their impact on our local communities. Since the start of the program in October 2024, the Eviction Prevention Program has served 841 households (found on the Eviction Prevention Program Dashboard through MaineHousing) with many more to come. Programs such as this provide an opportunity to serve community members who do not currently have access to the support they need to remain housed. We cannot do everything, but we can all do something. The Eviction Prevention Program is something that Maine deserves to see continue.

