

To: Senator Chip Curry, Representative Traci Gere, and members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee

From: Liz Eisele McLellan, Westbrook, ME

Re: Support for LD 1522, An Act to Establish the Maine Eviction Prevention Program

Hi, my name is Liz Eisele McLellan. I work for Quality Housing Coalition, and am the Program Coordinator for the current pilot of the Eviction Prevention Program that launched in October of 2024. I am also the founder and chair of the Westbrook Community Housing Coalition. Today, I am speaking in support of the EPP Rental Assistance Bill LD 1522 that is in front of you.

I imagine that trying to find solutions that will help eradicate and reduce the impact of the housing crisis on constituents (on neighbors, friends, and family) often feels like you are throwing spaghetti at the wall to see what sticks. The pilot Eviction Prevention Program was a piece of spaghetti. And I hope you are able to see that it stuck. The impact that it has had on Mainers' lives has been real. It's been important and it's been needed. And it is still needed, and so I hope, as you are looking at all of the different options for how you can continue to support the people of Maine that are struggling, that are afraid of becoming homeless, that are afraid of sleeping in tents, living in their cars, trying to explain to their children why they can't have sleepovers, trying to navigate medical procedures when they don't know if they're gonna have a place to go home to, trying to stay sober while dealing with the trauma of also becoming unhoused. I hope that you are able to see that this noodle stuck and that funding this program again will continue to benefit those still in need.

At the beginning of the program, it was overwhelming to see the number of folks that needed help staying in their homes and over the past 7 months my team has worked as fast as we could to process, approve, and get folks the support that they desperately needed. Help that meant they could stay in their homes, that their children could stay in the school system, and that helped them catch their breath and get back to figuring out life. The way it should be.

The things that we have learned and improved upon, the efficiencies that have been determined throughout the course of this program should be here to stay, and that means that any funding that goes into this program as an extension does not go towards figuring out how to do something all over again, it goes to the people that need it. Right now we are able to process applications in a little as 7 to 10 days from when someone applies. The ability to do that means that we get people the support that they need quickly and before the trauma of becoming homeless, of losing their housing, becomes a reality.

The thing about pilot programs is that you learn so much when you do them and when you decide to renew that program, fund an extension of that program, you get to take all of the things that were learned, that were improved upon and you get to put them into practice for the long-term. I hope the testimony shared here today has demonstrated the extent of the impact that this program has had on your constituents. And that you can see the potential for EPP the sequel. For the noodle that stuck. Thank you.