



Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development: My name is Cate Blackford and I am the public policy director for the Maine People's Alliance.

MPA is Maine's largest community action organization with 32,000 members from Kittery to Fort Kent. I am here today to speak in support of LD 1522.

Last session, MPA strongly supported the creation of the Maine Eviction Prevention Program pilot. LD 1522 builds on that foundation, investing in a program that has been shown to do exactly as it was intended: keeping people housed. The Eviction Prevention Program pilot is working. It is expected to keep 1,600 households safely housed. It is going to families and households with the greatest need. Three quarters of the households who have participated earn less than \$31,000 a year, including single parents and caregivers, Mainers with disabilities, older Mainers on fixed incomes, and workers who do essential but low-paying jobs. These are the people most at the risk of losing their housing in Maine today, simply because they do not have high incomes. We know that one of the greatest risks of homelessness is paying more than a third of your income on housing costs.

The EPP was designed to support exactly the people it has been helping and we urge you to make the program permanent.

Thank you all for the serious, thoughtful approach you are bringing to the complexity of the housing crisis and your reflections on the deeply entrenched policies and beliefs that have led us to where we are today. This committee's work is essential, to create a new housing system in Maine, where everyone has a safe, decent place to call home, that they can afford, in the community where they have ties.

I would be remiss, however, if I didn't also speak to how we fund this. Supporting a program that is working is one thing. Funding it is another. Given the current revenue projections and this committee's discussions about the biennial budget, I would also urge you all to work with your colleagues on the Taxation Committee and AFA, and in your caucuses to support new revenue to make this essential program possible.

Thank you again for your hard work on this critical issue and for the opportunity to speak with you today. I urge you to support this bill.