

# Blue Ridge Properties LLC & Whispering Pines LLC

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Dear Law Makers of the Great State of Maine, I am writing to you today in hopes of preventing LD 1723 from passing, An Act to Amend the Laws Governing Manufactured Housing Communities to Prevent Excessive Rent and Fee Increases. In our opinion this law will only cause the immediate increase of lot rents in smaller mobile home parks like ours....

My husband and I currently own 6 small mobile home parks which range in size from 15 lots up to 68 lots and are located between the Topsham and Lewiston areas of central Maine. We like to refer to them as communities, because that is what they are to us. We take great pride in ownership and managing these communities so the tenants whom pay us lot rent do not have any worries past taking care of their individual homes, we handle all the complaints and issues between neighbors, road paving and maintenance, water/sewer infrastructure, plowing and mowing green areas that they can all enjoy equally. We are also there for them with any questions on homeownership issues and repair and maintenance on their homes.

We have owned and managed many different manufactured housing communities over the 28 years we have been in property management. Therefore, we have a very clear understanding of what it takes and what it costs to maintain a community in tip top shape. We can testify to you today that passing LD 1723 will **negatively affect** the current tenants of manufactured housing communities **by forcing park owners to prematurely raise rents to stay ahead of projected costs, inflation, park maintenance and upgrades whether they be of choice or mandated by the future laws.**

**In the past 28 years the largest single rental increase from us has only ever been \$60.00/ month** and that was just recently after covid, due to the rising cost of inflation in all components of running and maintaining a manufactured housing community including but not limited to: labor, property tax increases, supplies, vehicles, insurance, water and PFAS testing, paving, equipment etc. Our average lot rent increase has been \$10.00 - \$25.00 over a 2-3 period.

**The majority of homeowners/tenants we have now are older and survive on a fixed income**, which we take into consideration when planning yearly repairs and upgrades whenever possible. We are currently investing in water system upgrades in our Bowdoin and Sabattus communities which are on wells and badly needed. These upgrades will cost

each community about \$150,000 for the 38-lot community and \$350,000.00 for the 68-lot community. These upgrades will be paid for with long term loans to keep the costs down. Keep in mind these communities would need to close without these needed upgrades as the current systems and piping are over 45 years old with inferior fittings which are failing. To keep up with our projected repairs and maintenance plans and project for any future mandates by law. We need to be able to have the freedom and ability to keep a healthy cash flow for unexpected repairs (water main breaks, EPA and water testing changes in the pipeline) and vacancies. **If this bill passes, we will be forced to raise our current rents over \$200.00 each month which is years ahead of schedule.** We project this will cause about 10-20% of our current older tenants to move making their homes of over 20 and 30 years unaffordable. We have talked to many other small community owners and they say the same, therefore this bill will do the opposite of what it is designed to do.

Let me explain further, a 10% increase over 4 years for a small community of 38 homes would equal a \$45.00 increase over 4 years which is \$20,520.00 for 1 year. Let us look at costs in today's world, a water main break can cost on average: \$5,000.00, paving a section of road starts at \$15,000.00. One plow truck is more than double what it was only 7 years ago, property taxes and expenses are rising every year. We are looking at 20 and 30 percent increases in property taxes for Lewiston, Sabattus and Lisbon this year if the budgets pass and after reassessments.

I am currently able to work with tenants who fall on hard times and need time to get caught up and/or I write off a month's rent when there is death or tragic event in the household. I do not always charge them for late fees or bounced checks, unlike larger institutions, my ability to assess and assist tenants will be greatly limited in the future if we are unable to manage our own business income with expenses.

We are in the pre-stages of planning a 30+ lot expansion in our Bowdoin community for 2026, however with all the bills lawmakers are putting into effect regarding manufactured housing communities, we are wondering if it will be worth our time and expense to move this project forward.

**I urge you to trust the community owners (especially the small ones) with managing their businesses and looking out for the homeowners/tenants that keep us in business. We value them deeply as we would not have a business without them! Please take this letter into consideration, we do not want to lose any tenants or make our communities unaffordable.**

**Kind Regards,** *Chris and Michelle Ames,* **Owners/Managers**