

Heather Richards
Standish
LD 1723

Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development, my name is Heather Richards and I live in the Pine Tree Estates mobile home park in Standish, Maine. I am writing to testify in favor of LD1723.

I purchased my current home with cash in 2018 and it needed a lot of work. I chose this home due to my retirement income projection, because I didn't have much money set aside and knew I would be living on Social Security. In the time I have lived here I have put at least 14 thousand dollars into the home redoing the bathroom and kitchen, new furnace, now oil-tank and lines, and a new hot water heater. This doesn't included the shed I purchased as it had a none when I moved in. I am supposed to retire in about 9 years. With the rate of rent increases, I will either be able to retire or be able to keep my home, but not both.

When I moved into my home in 2018, my lot rent was \$458 per month. This was prior to RHP's acquisition of the park. The rent amount at move in was the same rent that the previous tenant had been paying. This was common then. Rent didn't go up astronomically when the trailer changed hands like it does now. The following year, 2019, RHP bought the property and life changed. They began charging those of us who had oil tanks for an insurance policy they purchased to cover spills and such. The annual increase for oil tank fees increases every September. This fee is not optional and I also do not have the option to seek coverage on my own. I am also required to pay my lot rent and oil tank fee together every month. The two together are considered my "rent".

My first rent increase under RHP was 8.7% if you factor in the oil tank fee. The next two years the rent was raised 5% each year with the tank fee. Keep in mind those two years were during COVID. My lot rent is now \$645 with \$11.65 tank fee which is a 43.4% increase over my original rent amount when I moved in 6 years ago. If the lot rent follows this same amount of increase my lot rent will be almost \$1500 per month when I want to retire.

I won't be able to sell my home and get a good price for it, not even with the work I have put into it. The current lot rent for new tenants is \$997 per month. This is a 117% increase over the lot rent 6 years ago. My home is under 700 sq ft. It would appeal to someone who is single or a couple who are retired or have no children. If they are paying a huge lot rent, they won't want to add much for a mortgage payment on top of that. As one of the other residents said, we are trapped in our homes. We can't move them, That costs thousands of dollars and you'd have to have a place to put the trailer. We can't get what our homes are worth because the move-in lot rents make the total monthly payment amount for new tenants too expensive. It makes me feel helpless and trapped. My future and my ability to keep my home are in limbo. I am not alone. Many of my neighbors are on fixed incomes, many of them also have older homes. We are all trapped. We are all scared. We need this bill to pass so we can afford to keep our homes, or to sell them at a fair market price.