

Testimony of Charlotte Jacobs, on behalf of Stephani Watters and Alexander Johnston,
An Act to Amend the Laws Governing Manufactured Housing Communities to Prevent
Excessive Rent and Fee Increases
Sponsored by Representative Cheryl Golek

Good morning Senator Curry and Representative Gere and distinguished members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee,

I am here today to speak in full support of LD 1723, an act to amend the laws governing manufactured housing communities to prevent excessive rent and fee increases. I am here to speak on behalf of Alexander Johnston and Stephani Watters, they own a mobile home in Friendly Village, Gorham. Ms. Watters is a valued employee of the child care center that I manage, Mr. Johnston is her partner and their daughter who is about to turn 1 years old, attends our program at the Infant Toddler location. They are currently paying \$618/month and it goes up annually, yet they still have to pay the town property tax on the lot they live on. Stephani says, "it is impossible to upgrade our manufactured home due to excessive lot fees and taxes. If this proposed out of state buyer succeeds in the purchase and out bidding of the residents of the Friendly Village mobile home park, lot fees would double and this would force established and long time residents out of their homes, including this growing family.

"Maine has made it impossible to help the younger generations or the working and poor to buy affordable housing. There is no affordable housing anymore, even the "working poor" make too much money to qualify for assistance, yet we can't pay our bills due to all the deductions within our paychecks. If they double the lot fees this will force a family of 3 to become homeless."

As Stephani's employer, I can say with certainty that what's happening to her is more than just a personal hardship—it's a blow to our entire community. The possibility of her losing stable housing is not just heartbreaking—it's unjust. No one dedicating their life to educating and caring for our youngest children should have to live with the fear of losing their home.

If Stephani is forced out of her home, she may also be forced out of the field of early childhood education just to survive. That would be a devastating loss—not just for our program, but for the children, families, and future of our community.

This is yet another clear example of how our systems continue to work against the working class. We are watching a committed, essential educator be put in an

impossible situation simply because our state and society have failed to invest in those who do the most important work.

We must do better. We must invest in our people. If we truly care about the future of our state, we have to start by caring for those who help build it—starting with educators like Stephani.