



Testimony in Opposition to LD 1806 - An Act to Create a Residential Rental Unit Registry - Submitted to the Housing and Economic Development Committee
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Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and esteemed members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee, my name is Sara McKee Boyer, I am the Executive Director of the Rental Housing Alliance, a 700 member landlord organization. I am here today in opposition of **LD 1806: An Act to Create a Residential Rental Unit Registry**

To solve Maine's housing crisis, we must empower and not punish the very people who can help: small landlords, homeowners willing to add accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and older Mainers who are open to home-sharing, as modeled by MaineHousing's Nesterly program.

But under LD 1806, those same individuals would be burdened by a state-run rental registry that adds complexity, cost, and risk.

Imagine a retiree who decides to rent out a room, or a homeowner who adds an ADU to help with expenses. Now imagine that retiree being told they must navigate a state run registration process and worse, that if the tenant relationship doesn't work out, they are unable to remove the tenant from their backyard or guest room? That's not encouraging housing, it's discouraging it.

Almost everyday, I get calls from small landlords asking, "*Why does it feel like there's a war on landlords?*" They're confused and disheartened. In the middle of a housing crisis, why are we creating new hurdles for the very people trying to help?

For many, the effort isn't worth the few hundred dollars they might clear each month. They are not large-scale investors, they are regular people trying to keep up with taxes, maintenance, and rising costs. I can't stress enough that small owners leave the market and take their units with them when they feel overburdened, overwhelmed and overregulated.

A handful of Maine towns have already implemented rental registries through thoughtful, locally-driven processes that included input from stakeholders. That's how it should be done. Municipalities understand their unique housing needs better than the state. Let's trust local governments to make these decisions, rather than impose a one-size-fits-all state mandate that may be ill-suited to their communities.

Rental registries do not increase safety. They do not improve accountability. They do not gain information that is already readily available through tax rolls, code enforcement and business licensing. But they *do* add burdens, especially for small landlords who are simply trying to stay afloat.

Please oppose LD 1806. Let's not drive out the responsible housing providers in favor of out-of-state corporate operators. Let's build a system that supports local solutions and treats small local landlords as part of the solution and not the enemy.

Please consider the following:

- **Weaponizing Technicalities** - Tying basic legal rights - like access to eviction proceedings - to compliance with rental registries creates dangerous loopholes that can be exploited. A missed filing or an unnoticed change in the law shouldn't strip property owners of due process.
- **Punishing Good Landlords Doesn't Solve Bad Behavior** - Rental registries often target responsible landlords with new fees, paperwork, and penalties, while doing little to address truly negligent actors who already operate outside the system.
- **Duplicative and Bureaucratic** - Information required in rental registries is already collected through tax rolls, code enforcement, and/or business licensing. A separate registry adds redundant bureaucracy without delivering better housing outcomes.
- **Registration Does Not Equate to Accountability** - There's no evidence that forcing landlords to register improves housing quality. Bad actors don't follow the rules to begin with - those who comply are already the ones maintaining safe, habitable units.
- **Disproportionately Burdens Small Landlords** - Mom-and-pop landlords are already navigating an increasingly complex legal landscape. New registration requirements risk pushing them out of the market, leading to further consolidation by large corporate investors.

- **Legal Inconsistencies and State Confusion** - Even the Maine Attorney General's model lease hasn't been updated to reflect recent legal changes. If the state can't keep up with its own requirements, how are landlords expected to stay compliant?
- **Costs Are Passed to Tenants** - The administrative costs and fines associated with rental registries often result in higher rents for tenants, further worsening the housing affordability crisis.
- **Focus on Enforcement, Not Paperwork** - We should invest in enforcing existing housing and safety laws - not creating another layer of regulation that burdens compliant landlords and fails to deter bad ones.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
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