



PINE TREE LEGAL ASSISTANCE, INC.

P.O. Box 2429
Augusta, ME 04338-2429
(207) 552-3120
<https://ptla.org>

In support of LD 1723 “An Act to Amend the Laws Governing Manufactured Housing Communities to Prevent Excessive Rent and Fees Increases”

May 2, 2025

Representative Golek, and distinguished members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee:

My name is Maddie Thomson Crossman. I am a staff attorney in the Augusta office of Pine Tree Legal Assistance. I have been at Pine Tree for over three years and have represented tenants in many parts of the state. I am testifying in support of LD 1723, and particularly in support of the Sponsor’s Amendment to the bill, dated April 23, 2025.

Pine Tree Legal Assistance provides free civil legal services to low-income Mainers. Many of our cases are on behalf of tenants facing eviction for nonpayment. It’s no secret that the cost of housing is rising rapidly across the state. In 2024, we received three times as many requests for help with a rent increase issue than in 2019. LD 1723 would provide a check on the rent and fee increases that are forcing mobile home park tenants from their homes.

Mobile Home Park Tenants are Uniquely Vulnerable

Mobile home ownership can be a pathway to affordable, stable housing for low-income Mainers. However, ownership of a mobile home located in a park can also result in extreme precarity, and the loss of a home in which families have invested a huge portion of their income, and years of their lives. A mobile home owner in a park pays lot rent to the park, pays fees for services the park provides, and may also be making payments toward the purchase of the home. The home’s seller is also often the park itself. Many homes are so deteriorated that they cannot be moved if lot rent and fees become unaffordable. When a new owner buys the park as an investment, and raises the rent and the fees for the services it provides, many tenants are forced to abandon their homes, or sell them at a loss. Our observations of many of our clients’ experiences are reflected in the Genesis Community Loan Fund report “Mobile Home Communities in Maine and the United States: A Valuable Source of Affordable Housing.”¹

I’ll describe what happened to one typical Pine Tree client family whose life could be stabilized by LD 1723. This is a disabled couple, surviving on social security income, who has lived in the same mobile home park since 2010. They moved in as tenants, renting the home and the lot as a whole.

Some years later, the family learned that the park had been sold, to an out-of-state investor, when they were offered a rent-to-own contract for their home. They had less than 30 days to decide whether to move out, or enter a mortgage-type contract to buy the home they were living in.

¹ Genesis Community Loan Fund, March 2025, available at: <https://genesiscfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/FINAL-Maine-Mobile-Home-Community-Research-April-2025.pdf>.



PINE TREE LEGAL ASSISTANCE, INC.

P.O. Box 2429
Augusta, ME 04338-2429
(207) 552-3120
<https://ptla.org>

Moving on that timeframe was impossible for this disabled and fixed-income family, so they signed the contract to buy, and began making payments toward ownership of the home. In addition, they had to pay lot rent and fees (for water, sewer, trash pickup, “administrative” costs) as determined by the park’s owner.² To raise the rent or fees for services, the park only has to send a letter. The park alone determines the lot rent amount; the park determines what services the tenants will receive, and how much they will pay.

Initially the family’s lot rent and fees were affordable, but the park has raised prices several times. The park owner hasn’t made structural improvements along with its rent increases; the family is paying more for a lot that is functionally the same as when they moved in. They dread the arrival of each new notice, and wonder when the rent and fees will be raised beyond what they can afford. Their home is not structurally sound enough to be moved; they were told recently that they are lucky that it is still standing, and certainly can never be transported to a different location. If they are evicted for nonpayment, they will lose the home into which they have invested tens of thousands of dollars that they might otherwise have saved.

LD 1723 would protect this family from unsustainable increases in housing costs. Those rising costs, if unchecked, will result in homelessness for this family, and for others like it. This bill would require that increases in rent and fees be reasonably linked to the park’s costs in maintaining the park and providing services to tenants. It would require that tenants be given more notice of rent and fee increases, enabling them to plan for the added expense, if it is affordable, or to make plans to move away with some semblance of dignity. The requirement that the manufactured housing board include tenants and those who understand their needs, will additionally protect the ordinary Mainers who live in mobile home parks.

Conclusion

Maine families living in mobile home parks are uniquely vulnerable to displacement and devastating loss if rent and fee increases are unchecked. This bill will provide invaluable protection and stability for these families.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments today. I hope you will vote *ought to pass*.

Sincerely,

Maddie Thomson Crossman

Pine Tree Legal Assistance, Inc.

² “Too Damn High: How Junk Fees Add to Skyrocketing Costs,” National Consumer Law Center, Nelson, et al., 2023, available at <https://www.nclc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/JunkFees-Rpt.pdf>.