

Statement for LD2149 for the Housing & Economic Development Committee

Hello committee members, my name is Sarah Giles-Gardner. I have Dysarthria, (a speech disorder that affects the way I talk) FND, and a Covid-19 vaccine injury. Please be patient and let me know if you need me to repeat something. I live at 17 Pine Haven Street in Saco Maine, and I would like to submit a statement in support for LD2149 for the Housing & Economic Development Committee on Thursday January 22, 2025.

As the Blue Haven community moves forward with this mediation process that was put into place by the State of Maine to help protect both residents and businesses. This might have started off as a great idea, however so far it's done nothing, but add more stress and strain on already a difficult time for residents who are on a fixed income and are disabled, veterans, single moms, elderly, and people are scared to speak up about what is happening around us in our mobile home parks. These large corporations have done nothing but steal our hard-earned money and continue to put none of it back into our community. Even when they know we have large capital improvements that need to be completed. So, with the CPI plus 1% rent increase they know that they can charge us again even more next year if they present these projects. However, there is no guarantee that these projects will ever be completed by them. 2 years ago they submitted our project to the city and have raised our rents the last 5 years and according to the city of Saco planning board it's on administrative pause because the company never responded or even started the process with the planning board to get our projects done for city sewer, but yet we have a piece of paper that has plans on it, but no set plans are being made currently at Saco city hall. However, according to the owners they will be starting this project soon. They have no intentions of doing it at all. They believe they are above the laws that you and the city create and no matter how many laws we find that they break, we still don't feel like we are getting support from any of the laws that you write because they always find loopholes and work their way around and interpret in whatever way works for them to benefit them.

Throughout this mediation process it would have been nice to have a resource or place to go for questions about this process. We should also have been given an attorney for legal advice as they have several attorneys that were not disclosed to us until closer to the mediation date. Also, we tried to reach out to Pine Tree Legal at the beginning of all of this and they could not help us either. Luckily, we all pooled together and got just enough for an attorney for this mediation process, but we still need a lot more help from you. These companies have posted illegal street signs according to city of Saco and who is going to make sure that this gets enforced or corrected for safety's sake. This company just plans to sell us amongst themselves and leave us with all these problems, some of which they created. We used to have the correct street signs with Pine Haven

Street on them, now they just say Pine Haven. Unfortunately, unless someone listens to us and decides to put a stop to this company, they will continue to do the same illegal practices repeatedly with someone else. Where do you stand, with the people or the corrupt companies? It's your choice.

My husband also wrote a letter to the Attorney General's office because upon request of looking into my lease, they could not provide me with one. They requested me to go sign a new lease because they say that I'm a tenant at will. When I read their new lease, they require me to be responsible for adding an insurance policy with a minimum of 300,000 on my home (which is worth around 121,700, so why do I have to put more insurance than is needed). They purchased the park for 12 million and now this year was appraised for 11.3 million, until we found errors at Saco city hall and now it's worth is 10.9 million dollars. We have had constant concerns and problems ever since this new company took over 5 years ago and the lack of work reflects their dedication to our communities in Maine. Where is the oversight for these companies? We are up against a 67.9-million-dollar company right now. Any support is greatly appreciated. Donna Bailey has been inspiring role in our community, but again it's not enough we all need your help to create stronger language to protect the people of these communities against these large corporations who will continue unless you help us to enforce the laws, not just create them. All these laws and languages are just pieces of paper to them, and we are seen as a commodity to them. Please help to change this corruption.

I thought as we approached this mediation things would be more transparent and the only thing that we keep finding is more lies and no justification for the \$145.00 increase to my rent. LD1016 was created so that when the park was sold then the buyer would have to pay the 10,000 fee per lot, however, to circumvent around this law and bypass the right of first refusal law to sell to us the residents first they are just transferring ownership underneath us amongst themselves through a real estate transfer tax. So now the buyer doesn't have to pay the 10,000 per lot fee, nor do they have to offer it to us. They also don't have to disclose it to us. Even though they continue to inform us that we are not for sale, we have found evidence to override their claims.

They have also given us a breakdown of what they proposed our lot fee to be going towards and \$100.00 of this fee is The LD1016 that is being paid by the residents and not the buyer. I can see justification for some rent increases; however, this should not be part of our rent increase. These large corporations come in and find ways to charge us more either legally or illegally and they get away with it. I'm strapped for every penny I have right now. Anything you can do to be able to protect residents from these large corporate moguls would be the difference between having affordable housing still or becoming homeless. This is our reality and it's happening in real time, and this should be your top priority so we can continue to be productive members of our community and committee. We have created a committee to help other vulnerable residents who are

scared to speak up against them. Thank you for your time today and I hope my voice can be heard. I would like to see Maine people continuing to help Mainers who have lived here all their lives. We just want a safe place to call home that's affordable.

Sarah Giles-Gardner

Saco

LD 2149

I have uploaded my statement. Thanks

Sarah