

Thea Hart
Belfast
LD 2212

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development:

My name is Thea Hart and I live in Belfast. I am writing to testify neither for nor against LD 2212.

Housing is one of the biggest issues facing our state— and I experience it while being very privileged and having supports that most others don't. Our seniors, those working for minimum wage; young families; those experiencing homelessness often do not have the privilege to create the housing they need. All of us deserve a safe, affordable place to live so we can continue to call Maine our home. The committee has the opportunity to respond to our state's shortage of affordable units by approving this proposed budget. Doing so serves our rural communities and supports high-quality dignified housing for those, and ideally, by those in need.

I urge you to fully fund emergency rental assistance in the Eviction Prevention Program. This program has been widely successful in keeping people in their homes. Survey results show that seven out of eight participants maintained their housing after engaging with the program. Furthermore, 70% of applicants found the process easy to navigate, praising the straightforward instructions and helpful staff. At a time when we have great economic and political uncertainty, and thousands of Mainers have lost income out of fear of leaving their homes, this program is more important than ever to fully fund.

I appreciate the Governor's proposed shelter funding. I urge you to include that funding in the supplemental budget, along with additional funding to fully support our shelter system, such as the funding proposed in LD 2124

Funding for housing is essential to Maine families and communities. I urge you to raise revenue and reject Trump's cuts to guarantee essential programs like housing. Please include LD 1089, 229 and 1879 (or better) in the budget.

Thank you for your work and for considering my testimony.

Thea Hart