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In Favor of LD2212: An Act Making Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development. My name is Emily Flinkstrom and I am the Executive Director of Fair Tide and co-founder of Mainspring. I am writing to support investments in housing included in the proposed supplemental budget.

Fair Tide develops affordable housing in southern Maine and provides supportive services to help people achieve long-term stability. As co-founder of Mainspring, a collaborative social service hub in Kittery, we also work every day with individuals and families who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness.

Housing is not a side issue — it is the foundation that determines whether Maine families can live, work, and thrive. According to the State of Maine Housing Production Needs Study, Maine needs 80,000 homes by 2030. To meet that goal, we must produce roughly 8,500 to 9,300 homes per year, yet we are currently producing about half of what is required. This shortage is now a statewide economic threat - workers cannot find homes they can afford, employers cannot hire or expand, and communities are losing the people who keep them running.

The housing continuum in Maine is not healthy right now. People are stuck at every level. Individuals remain in emergency shelters because there is no affordable rental housing available. Older adults are living alone in large homes because there are no smaller, accessible options to downsize into. Young families are stuck in rentals because homeownership is out of reach. When one part of the continuum fails, pressure builds across the entire system.

In southern Maine — often perceived as prosperous — the challenges are acute. Land is expensive. Construction costs are extraordinarily high. Available subsidies are limited and highly competitive. It takes years and multiple funding sources to bring a single affordable housing development to fruition. State investment is often the critical piece that leverages federal tax credits and private financing to make projects possible. Without it, the math simply does not work.

Through our work at Mainspring, where we serve individuals and families experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk, we see the daily human toll of this shortage. It is incredibly difficult to sit across from someone in crisis and tell them there are no available units and no next step beyond adding their name to multiple waitlists. Emergency shelter is not meant to be



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permanent, yet without sufficient affordable housing, people remain there far longer than intended. Even more troubling, some individuals cannot access a shelter bed at all and are forced to sleep in tents, in their cars, or in other unsafe conditions.

The \$70 million proposal recognizes that housing is infrastructure. It supports production, preservation, homelessness response, aging in place, and local implementation. The \$55 million for new housing production — including the Rural Affordable Rental Program, Affordable Homeownership Program, middle-income pilot, mobile home park expansion, and leveraging of federal housing tax credits — will expand supply across the continuum.

Equally important is the \$12 million for the Emergency Housing Relief Fund. This fund provides flexible, responsive resources that support both individuals experiencing homelessness and the agencies working to serve them. It lifts up proven programs while also allowing communities to create new services that fill critical gaps as needs evolve. Housing needs are not static, and our response cannot be either.

If we want a housing continuum that functions — where shelter is available in times of crisis but remains a short-term bridge, rental housing is attainable, older adults can downsize with dignity, and young families can build equity and stability — we must continue to invest across the system.

Please support the investments in housing included within the supplemental budget proposal. Maine's future depends on a housing system that works at every level. Thank you.

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