



To: Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations & Financial Affairs and the Joint Standing Committee on Housing & Economic Development

From: Aroostook Partnership

Re: Support of Housing Investments Proposed in \$70M Supplemental Budget

Date: 18 February 2026

Dear Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations & Financial Affairs and Housing & Economic Development:

My name is Kiersten S. Purington and I am the President & CEO of the Aroostook Partnership in Caribou, ME. The Aroostook Partnership is a unique private/public consortium of over 65 businesses, the Northern Maine Development Commission, County higher education institutions, and several regional non-profit organizations. Our mission is to ensure the economic strength, growth, and resiliency of Aroostook County.

On behalf of the Aroostook Partnership, I am writing in strong support of the housing investments included in the proposed \$70 million supplemental budget.

In my work serving Aroostook County and rural Maine, housing is consistently identified as the number one barrier to economic growth, workforce attraction, and community stability. Employers are hiring, but workers cannot find places to live. Young families want to stay but cannot find homes they can afford. Older adults want to age in place, but their homes need repairs and upgrades to remain safe and accessible.

Maine needs 80,000 homes by 2030 — that is our current deficit plus projected future need, according to the State of Maine Housing Production Needs Study. To meet that goal, Maine must produce approximately 8,500 to 9,300 homes per year through 2030. We currently produce only about 4,800 homes annually — roughly half the pace required.

This shortage is now a statewide economic threat. When workers cannot find homes they can afford, employers cannot hire or expand. In rural counties like Aroostook, where our population is older and our housing stock is aging, even small supply gaps have outsized impacts. Limited rentals, higher construction costs, and lower median incomes mean market forces alone cannot close this gap. State partnership is essential.

The \$70 million proposal is strategic and comprehensive. It supports production, preservation, homelessness response, aging-in-place, and local implementation — all critical components of a functioning housing ecosystem in rural Maine. Specifically, the proposal includes:

\$55 million for new housing production for:

- The Rural Affordable Rental Program to create 83 new apartments in rural areas across Maine. Programs like this are especially vital in Aroostook County where affordable rural rental options are limited.
- The Affordable Homeownership Program to help lower development costs for single-family subdivisions, expected to create 88 homes.
- A new MaineHousing pilot to create 100 new homes for middle-income Maine people — those who earn too much to qualify for traditional affordable housing but still cannot compete in today's market.



- A mobile home park expansion and infill pilot expected to create 429 affordable homes by supporting infrastructure and expansion in existing communities.
- Funding to leverage federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, creating 125 new rental apartments and unlocking additional federal and private investment.

\$15 million to support proven existing programs:

- The Emergency Housing Relief Fund to provide short- and long-term housing solutions for individuals and families experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk.
- The Community Aging in Place Program to upgrade 645 homes so older Mainers can remain safely in their communities rather than entering higher-cost care.
- The Maine Office of Community Affairs to help municipalities implement zoning and land use reforms recently passed by the Legislature — ensuring policy changes translate into real production.

Housing is infrastructure. It is as essential to Maine's future as roads, broadband, and energy. It determines where people can live, work, and build a life. Stable housing strengthens communities - children perform better in school and families put down roots; employers grow.

State investment does not stand alone — it leverages federal resources and private financing, multiplying impact and accelerating production. Without this funding, projects stall, financing gaps widen, and rural communities fall further behind.

Cutting or reducing this \$70 million investment would be devastating to rural Maine and especially Aroostook County where the housing crisis remains a critical issue. Any reductions to this investment fundamentally threatens the economic development goals we are all working toward and the ability to sustain a strong and resilient economy in Northern Maine.

I respectfully urge you to support the housing investments included in the supplemental budget. For Aroostook County and rural communities across Maine, this funding is not optional — it is foundational.

Thank you for your time and your leadership.

Sincerely,



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