

Megan Michaels

Project Home

Cumberland County

My name is Megan Michaels, and I work as an administrator for the Eviction Prevention Program. I am testifying in support of LD 1522. This is a local solution, with local control- Mainers stabilizing Mainers, ensuring they can stay in their homes, jobs, and communities. Helping renters prevent eviction has already helped unburden the state as it works to manage a multi-pronged housing crisis.

What I've seen throughout the pilot program is that paired with the rising cost of living, Mainers have had their ability to recover from a financial shock eroded. Even households earning well over 30% of the Area Median Income are still financially devastated by factors like a health crisis, the detention of an income earner, and federal work stoppages. All it takes is one late notice to begin their eviction process. We have been able to stop that process before it starts for over 1,280 households. We get emails every day asking how to apply- people are learning about this pilot program, and hoping they can find temporary relief to prevent the unthinkable- homelessness.

Evictions are costly and terrifying. If households didn't have the money to pay off past due rent, then how could they find a new place to live, afford a security deposit, all while keeping their work schedule, let alone with an eviction now on their record? Consider the following:

Looking at the data available through EPP and if we assume, at the very least, that there is one month of rent charged as a security deposit for each relocation *after eviction*, that is a sum of just over \$1,465,000 that Mainers must come up with, or about \$1,144 for each of the 1280 households assisted so far. If we add the common charge of last month's rent, that figure is doubled: \$2,930,000, or \$2,287 per household. If financially stressed families can even find this amount of money after moving costs, it now cannot be used for anything else. Debt is accrued, leaving you with no margin for unexpected repairs, accidents, and strained relationships. The more likely reality is that these charges are untenable, and families must now find housing for an undetermined amount of time in shelters, expensive motels, crowded family homes, or begin a cycle of homelessness, job loss, school disruptions, and medical care forgone.

For the 1,280 households we have assisted since launch day, this program has been a lifeline.

A failure to fund the Eviction Prevention Program would be fiscally irresponsible. If funded, the Eviction Prevention Program addresses not only the immediate needs of our neighbors, but also invests in Maine's economic stability.

Thank you,

Megan Michaels