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**Maine Community Action Partnership Supports Housing Sections of
LD 258: An Act Making Unified 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, 2023, June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025**

February 9, 2023

Senators Rotundo and Pierce, Representatives Sachs and Gere, members of the Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Housing, I am Megan Hannan, Executive Director of Maine Community Action Partnership, and we support several sections LD 258 and the Governor's proposed budget housing priorities.

I spent some time talking about root causes of homelessness and risk of being homeless with the Housing Committee last week, and I will not go through that again, but I reference it to reiterate that being at risk of being unhoused, being a paycheck or car repair away from it, is due to many factors faced by low- and moderate-income families daily. Rents are going up in every town and city, and too many of the people we depend on – teachers, police, plumbers – are being squeezed out.

Compounding the problem in Maine is simply that we do not have enough housing built and move in ready for all who need it, let alone housing specifically for working people and families. The \$30 million proposed to increase the supply of housing is one of the most important pieces of the budget this year, and I hope you will support it. We have public and private companies and community action agencies that want to build more workforce housing, but building new developments is costly and when you are also assuming lower rents, the math doesn't always look good. And that is why the Rural Rental Program and Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Program, both administered by MaineHousing, are critical to our success.

Funding both programs is imperative. The LIHTC program is good for Maine, but as a very rural state its rules and scoring mean rural development is harder to fund. In Waldo County, for example, the local community action agency has land ready to develop for their office and workforce housing, something much needed and very hard to find in the greater Belfast area. The Rural Rental Program makes financing that development much more likely, and there are many more rural areas that could follow that lead.

We also fully support the shelter operating subsidy, something we know now, more than ever, is a life saving intervention for people who are unhoused. My agencies are now including shelters in their menu of services, some for the first time, due to the increasing need.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Megan Hannan