



MAINE AFFORDABLE HOUSING COALITION

*131<sup>st</sup> Legislature  
Joint Select Committee on Housing*

*Testimony of Laura Mitchell, Executive Director of the Maine Affordable Housing Coalition on April 4, 2023  
in favor of LD 2*

Good afternoon, Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and members of the Joint Select Committee on Housing. My name is Laura Mitchell, I serve as the Executive Director of the Maine Affordable Housing Coalition.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you all in support of LD 2: An Act to End Chronic Homelessness by Creating the Housing First Fund, sponsored by Speaker Talbot Ross. This bill focuses on a specific, chronically homeless population, many of whom have multiple chronic health conditions. It is estimated there are about 400 individuals experiencing chronic homelessness in Maine. A place to call home, and supportive services to ensure they are stable in that home, saves our society emergency room visits, law enforcement engagement, and untold trauma for each of these people.

The Maine Affordable Housing Coalition is a nonprofit membership organization of more than 140 Maine housing development, architecture, construction, design, engineering, shelter, and housing services organizations. MAHC advocates for the creation and preservation of affordable housing so all Maine people have a home, and that's why I'm here today in support of LD2.

Identifying funding for the sustainable delivery of supportive services for people exiting chronic homelessness has been a challenge for many years. LD2 provides a funding stream for a segment of people experiencing homelessness that can have measurable impact in critical, urban areas in Maine.

As a part of what MAHC hopes will be a comprehensive strategy from the Joint Select Committee on Housing to address the lack of 20,000+ affordable homes in Maine, we see LD2 as an important step in building homes, and supporting residents, for one of Maine's most vulnerable populations – the chronically homeless that require 24/7 support services.

We need more housing in Maine. For seniors, people with disabilities, people experiencing homelessness, and those working for minimum wage that can't afford housing. With Maine's population aging and retiring, we also need new 5,000 new workers a year to move to Maine. That requires more housing.

With the necessary subsidy funding to make it feasible, Maine's development and construction companies are ready to build affordable housing. A recent survey by MAHC of 34 developers, highlighted a pipeline of 700+ units of housing with only funding stopping shovels going in the ground this year. From the construction side, just 5 construction companies had the capacity in the next year to build 500+ affordable homes. We know there are many more builders who have capacity that the survey didn't capture.

MAHC supports LD2 and the Joint Select Committee on Housing's efforts to meet housing needs across the state, because this is a crisis impacting every town and person in Maine. Housing is critical infrastructure for our state's economy and health. Now is the time for bipartisan action to build housing, and support those who need it most to stay in their home, so all Maine people have a home.

I am testifying today in support of the great State of Maine investing in building affordable housing through LD2. This is a piece of the comprehensive funding strategy needed in this legislative session to address the affordable housing crisis. The Maine Affordable Housing Coalition urges you to support this step forward. Because all people in Maine deserve a home. Thank you.