

**TESTIMONY OF MAINE IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS COALITION
SUPPORTING L.D. 226:**

An Act to Address Maine's Affordable Housing Crisis

Public Hearing: Friday, April 14, 2023, at 9:00am

Sponsor: **Representative Rebecca Millet of Cape Elizabeth**

Link: <https://legislature.maine.gov/legis/bills/getPDF.asp?paper=HP0147&item=1&snum=131>

~~Chair Tipping~~, ~~Chair Bender~~, and Members of the Committee on ~~Suburban~~ Housing:

My name is Ruben Torres and I am here to testify in support of L.D. 226 on behalf of the board and members of the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition (MIRC), a coalition of almost 100 organizations from across the state committed to advancing and defending the rights of Maine's immigrant communities. Our mission is to improve the legal, social, and economic conditions experienced by immigrants, therefore improving the state as a whole.

As you know, Maine is facing a severe shortage of affordable housing stock. This has resulted in increased housing costs, severe financial strain on low- and middle-income households, and a growing number of people who are unsheltered. I could cite more data, but we don't need the data to see the reality on the ground. The demand for affordable housing in Maine far exceeds the available supply, leaving many families and individuals struggling to find safe and affordable places to live. This is not an immigrant-specific issue or a Portland-specific issue; it affects communities from all backgrounds and all parts of the state.

Others testifying here today will no doubt be providing both qualitative and quantitative examples of the housing crisis. For MIRC, we see this most in the hundreds of immigrants in southern Maine who are unable to find adequate housing. There are a number of solutions we have proposed and needs we have identified, but the greatest is this: Build. More. Housing.

Thankfully, L.D. 226 seeks to allocate \$200 million in funding for affordable housing construction. This would have a significant impact on our communities. This funding would support the development of new affordable housing units, helping to increase the supply of affordable homes. It could also create jobs in the construction industry, stimulate economic growth and development, and contribute to the overall well-being of our great state. Indeed, investing in affordable housing is not only a matter of social responsibility but also an essential economic strategy. Affordable housing is a critical component of healthy, thriving, safe communities, as it helps to stabilize families, support workforce development, and reduce the strain on public resources. It is difficult to focus on education, language training, or workforce programs when you do not know where you will be sleeping at night.

L.D. 226 represents a vital step toward addressing Maine's housing crisis, and MIRC strongly urges you to support and pass this bill. The \$200 million in funding for affordable housing construction would be a significant investment in the future of our state, helping to alleviate the affordable housing shortage, reduce homelessness, and improve the quality of life for countless Mainers, both immigrant and non-immigrant alike.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue and for all the work you do for the people of Maine.