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Maine Community Action Partnership Supports LD 226 An Act to Address Maine's Affordable Housing Crisis

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Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, members of the Special Committee on Housing, I am Megan Hannan, Executive Director of the Maine Community Action Partnership and we support LD 226 An Act to Address Maine's Affordable Housing Crisis.

In a recent Children's Caucus in the Statehouse, the recently retired CEO said that one of the most important factors that are keeping businesses from returning to pre-pandemic production levels is the lack of affordable housing, throughout the entire state. 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 \$200 million proposed in LD 226 to increase the supply of affordable housing throughout the state is an important step in making a difference. We have public and private companies and community action agencies that want to build more affordable housing, but building new developments is costly and when you are also assuming lower rents, the math doesn't always look good.

Maine's Community Action Agencies currently own and/or operate over 800 affordable housing units, in addition to housing for specific populations who are older or have specific diagnoses; and we have 200 new units coming online within the next year or so. We are poised to either lead or partner with builders to create affordable housing that has supports that lead to economic mobility, including early childhood education, workforce development and continuing education.

Funding rural programs in addition to our smaller and larger cities 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.

Thank you for your time and attention, I am happy to try to answer any questions you have.

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