



#### Board Members

**Aaron Shapiro**  
Retired Community Development  
Director, Cumberland County  
*Board President*

**Chip Newell**  
Principal, The NewHeight Group  
*Board Treasurer*

**Gunnar Hubbard**  
Principal, Thornton Tomasetti  
*Board Secretary*

**David Birkhahn**  
Vice President, TD Bank

**Elizabeth Boepple**  
Partner, Murray, Plumb, & Murray

**Jan McCormick**  
Retired Affordable Housing  
Investment Executive

**Luc Nya**  
Mental Health Program Coordinator  
OCFS/Corrections Liaison, Maine DHHS

**Angela Perkins**  
Westbrook Resident

**Thomas Placek**  
Huston Commons Caseworker,  
Preble Street

**Jennifer Putnam**  
Executive Director, Waypoint

**Jennifer Rottmann**  
Deputy Director/CFO, The Genesis Fund

**John Ryan**  
President, Wright-Ryan Construction

**Bill Shanahan**  
Co-President, Evernorth

**Kimberly Twitchell**  
Maine Regional President, NBT Bank

#### Staff Contacts

**Cullen Ryan**  
Executive Director

**Kyra Walker**  
Chief Operating Officer

**Sarah Gaba**  
Occupancy Manager

**Mara O'Shea**  
Compliance Manager

**Meredith Smith**  
Supportive Housing Manager

**Chris Harmon**  
Controller

**Jenny Jimino**  
Bookkeeper

**Vickey Merrill**  
Advocacy Director

**Bree LaCasse**  
Development Director

**Brian Kilgallen**  
Development Officer

**Robyn Wardell**  
Development Officer

April 14, 2023

Re: LD 226, An Act to Address Maine's Affordable Housing Crisis

Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and members of the Joint Select Committee on Housing, my name is Cullen Ryan, and I am the Executive Director of Community Housing of Maine (CHOM). CHOM is the largest supportive housing provider for homeless populations in Maine.

I am testifying in strong support of LD 226, An Act to Address Maine's Affordable Housing Crisis. This bill provides one-time funds to MaineHousing in the amount of \$100,000,000 in fiscal year 2023-24 and in fiscal year 2024-25 (only these FYs) to increase affordable housing stock in the State. We really need this kind of major investment in housing.

There is an overall shortage of affordable housing for all populations in Maine: The aggregate waiting list for affordable housing managed by state's largest apartment association has risen to more than 30,000 households; 26,000 Maine households are on waiting lists for federal rental assistance, often waiting five to ten years. This data is as of 2019 – it has worsened since, especially amid the pandemic and the sharp increase in cost of housing. There is an extraordinary unmet demand for affordable, quality housing for all populations, as well as supportive housing for people experiencing homelessness with complex issues such as serious and persistent mental illness, substance use disorder, and trauma from domestic violence.

In the past few years, resources have only allowed for about 180-220 affordable housing units a year to come online, and closer to 12 each year for supportive housing. Despite MaineHousing and the Legislature increasing resources toward this, the need for affordable and supportive housing far exceeds the supply, especially for homeless and special needs populations. Only a small fraction of affordable housing has been targeted toward serving homeless populations. Without creating solutions at a more significant scale, we won't make a real difference in the lives of people in Maine with low-incomes, and we won't make a real difference in ending homelessness. The time to invest is now.

Please consider a carve-out to ensure a portion goes to support homeless and special needs populations, which aligns with the Frequent Users System Engagement (FUSE) Collaborative recommendations. Homelessness is solvable. Housing and services are the key tools we need to do so. Making homelessness rare, brief, and one-time in Maine will require an investment in a spectrum of solutions. LD 226 is one of those key investments and could greatly assist Maine in ending homelessness.

We need sufficient supplies of all types of housing in Maine including affordable and supportive housing, to have robust, inclusive communities where everyone can live and thrive.

Please pass LD 226 to provide Maine with an injection of resources to create affordable and supportive housing at a scale that is commensurate with need. We will all be far better for doing so, and it would greatly assist Maine in ending and preventing homelessness.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.