

131st Legislature
Senate of
Maine
Senate District 23

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Testimony of Senator Mattie Daughtry introducing
LD 1074, An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Fund New
Affordable Housing for Low-income Households
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
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Good morning, Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and Esteemed Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, my name is Mattie Daughtry, and I proudly represent Senate District 23, which includes Brunswick, Freeport, Harpswell, Pownal, Chebeague Island, and part of Yarmouth. Today I am pleased to introduce LD 1074, “An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Fund New Affordable Housing for Low-income Households.”

In Maine, we are facing a housing crisis and the status quo is not sustainable. Supply has not kept up with demand. On average, we’ve built only 250 units of affordable housing annually; yet, the need is 1,000 units per year. Moreover, there are over 25,000 people on affordable housing waitlists statewide. It’s clear that Maine needs more affordable housing today to accommodate our state’s workforce needs, young people, and older Mainers. If we don’t act now, then these needs will only grow in the decades to come.

The housing crunch is not going away. Current production is not sustainable since more people from other states are moving to Maine. During the pandemic, Maine was one of the states that had a net population gain because people were priced out of unaffordable places or found remote work that they could do from anywhere. Continuing this trend, 16,300 people moved to Maine in 2022. However, only 6,800 building permits were awarded. Of these too-few, permits, 4 out of 5 were for single-family homes. Maine has an aging population, and many older Mainers struggle to afford housing as they age. Investing in affordable housing can help ensure that seniors can age in place and maintain their independence for as long as possible.

Like our roads and bridges, housing is infrastructure. Nearly every year, lawmakers ask Mainers to approve bonds that fund improvements to transportation infrastructure. Now it’s time for us to make that same type of investment in our housing infrastructure. No is saying that we can’t fix potholes and build more affordable housing at the same time – we just haven’t tried to.

The lack of affordable housing is also a barrier to economic growth. Without affordable housing, businesses – like my own – struggle to attract and retain employees. Workers may be forced to