



MAINE AFFORDABLE HOUSING COALITION

131st Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

Testimony of Laura Mitchell, Executive Director of the Maine Affordable Housing Coalition on April 25, 2023
in favor of LD 1074 An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Fund New Affordable Housing for Low-income Households - Sen. Matthea Daughtry of Cumberland

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs. My name is Laura Mitchell, I serve as the Executive Director of the Maine Affordable Housing Coalition.

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. We work to address Maine's housing crisis by advocating for the creation and preservation of housing for all people in Maine.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you all in favor of LD 1074, An Act for a General Fund Bond Issue to Fund New Affordable Housing for Low-Income Households. Maine Housing is currently out of funding for these programs. This new investment can quickly be put to use building affordable homes. Never in the history of our great State of Maine have we been faced with a housing crisis like this. Every town and person in Maine is being impacted. It has spilled over into other major issues you are managing – workforce shortages and education needs; and it intersects with Maine's struggles with substance use and mental health. Now is the time for action.

1. Maine is lacking more than 20,000 units of housing. The demand is growing, and far outstrips supply. We see this every day with thousands of people in Maine living outside or homeless, rental vacancy rates are the 2nd lowest in the nation (less than 1% in many areas), evictions are increasing, and 15,000 Maine people are on waitlists for rental vouchers.
2. While this crisis might seem complex, the answer is simple. More housing units affordable for Maine people.
3. Funding is the number one barrier to increasing the supply of housing. Maine Housing is out of subsidy money for its key housing production programs like LIHTC and the Rural Rental Housing Program.

Not since the 1970s has Maine seen housing production at the level it needs. Dirigo is Maine's tagline to lead. Maine must lead the way to help its people today. We can't look back on this time as we have the last few decades and wonder why things are getting worse. We can make history today with bold investment in housing production by supporting LD 1074.

MAHC surveyed some of its developers around the State and they are ready to build nearly 2,500 units of affordable housing in the next few years. Construction companies have the capacity to build as well. They simply need the funding to make it possible.

Housing is critical infrastructure for our state's economy and health. LD 1074 can help Maine turn the tide to a more vibrant, health place to call home. I am testifying today in support of the great State of Maine investing in building affordable housing through LD 1074. This is an important 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.

