

131st Legislature
Senate of Maine
Senate District 28

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Testimony of Senator Ben Chipman introducing LD 1481, “An Act Regarding Clearance for Occupancy Under the Lead Poisoning Control Act.”
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
April 28, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and Distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Ben Chipman and I represent Senate District 28, which includes part of Portland. I am here to introduce LD 1481, “An Act Regarding Clearance for Occupancy Under the Lead Poisoning Control Act.”

This legislation would allow owner-occupied buildings of 3 units or less to be abated for lead poisoning one unit at a time. In cases when lead abatements are mandated by Maine statute, this law would allow property owners of multi-unit housing to abate one unit at a time when they are unable to fund a full abatement at the outset.

Lead abatements are expensive. From the security deposit to the final total listed on the invoice, abatements can cost tens of thousands of dollars. While large housing companies can afford these costs, individuals who rent out units in the building they live in are not able to shoulder the cost without going bankrupt. Many multi-unit buildings were built more than 30 years ago meaning that lead paint is common, hence why the state mandate for requiring lead abatement exists. This also results in existing units becoming unavailable when the owner cannot afford to abate the unit, and subsequently cannot rent out the unit. In a time when housing is scarce, this is untenable.

I am not presenting this bill in an effort to ease lead abatement standards. My aim is to ensure that small property owners are not put in financial distress because they don’t have the funds to meet the state’s standards. Every unit is valuable, especially in the urban areas of Maine. Let’s prevent an exacerbation of the housing crisis by giving property owners the space to survive.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.