

Waterville Tenants Association  
Testimony in support of LD 1710, the HOME Act  
Jodie Hill  
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Senator Pierce, Representative Geer and members of the Housing Committee,

My name is Jodie Hill and I live in Waterville. I am a co-chair of the new Waterville Tenants Association. I also work a lot with Educare of Central Maine.

Our community needs a voice for tenants and we're trying to be that voice. I'm here to talk to you about the need for affordable, safe housing in our state.

My daughter and granddaughter are currently homeless. I'm here today to speak for them.

I know many tenants who are afraid if they speak up, they'll get in trouble with their landlords and lose their housing. I'm here today to speak for them too.

Housing is a statewide problem for sure but I want to share with you what I see happening in Waterville

- High rents - need rent caps, this is ridiculous. People would need to be making at least \$30/hr at their job just to get by to pay for the prices for rent, food, medical etc.
- Increasing homelessness
- the cost of just applying for housing - someone is making bank on all those rental application fees.
- Empty houses that could be converted in multi family housing
- Real estate interests and landlords have so much power and tenants have none

First, I want to talk to you about how people's wages don't match what people are charging for housing today. My daughter has started working at \$14/hr. Has been homeless for 4 months\_\_\_\_\_. She works as a substitute at Educare. But she doesn't have transportation and she's living on a shoestring. To survive at even a thousand a month, that's like a job that pays \$30/hr. I don't know of any jobs that pay that, but if you do please let me know and sign me up.. There's nothing she can afford. There should be help. I'm like her case manager, transporting her to work, appointments ,helping to call about apartments, going to see the apartments , asking questions at GA , Waterville Housing and the shelter. We're trying like hell to get a voucher for her right now. FYI there is a 5-10 year wait for housing vouchers... We feel like we're banging our heads against the wall.

In the meantime, she's living in a motel. It's no place to live with a kid, with the amount of drugs, bugs , roaches, and police at all hours. There's no kitchen to prepare food,there's no place to store food, so feeding her and her daughter is more expensive.

The motel costs \$100/night. Any money she has she pays for the hotel and then the city's GA program makes up the difference. That's \$3,000 a month. All her money has to go to the hotel, so she can't get a car and can't get to work without a ride. I asked the GA office if they would help with rent instead, and they said she had to find a place she can afford. There are no rents we can afford. \$3,000 a month could pay for 2 families to afford stable housing. Let's put these resources to stable housing and get our family members, friends and neighbors out of horrid conditions.

It feels like us tenants are just taking it, and taking it. There's homeless people everywhere like never before that I've seen. Some are working but can't afford the rents. They're only making enough to get groceries and pay for medical care. There's no end in sight and that's why I'm here to ask you to join in this fight.

Another big issue is that landlords won't take vouchers, so even when you get the voucher, it's still a struggle. I just tried to get my daughter into an apartment. I was asked: How much do you make? How many people? What kind of assistance? As soon as I said Section 8 or general assistance, they said no. Not all landlords are bad, but they have all the power, and when you have a lawyer going up against tenants, you know it's not a fair fight. Tenants need state leaders to stick up for them for a change.

The HOME Act would end the waiting list for Section 8 and make sure that people with vouchers don't face discrimination. It would give tenants living on next to nothing a chance to get into stable housing and rebuild their lives.

Ever since I started speaking up about out of control rents and housing discrimination in my community, I've been bullied by landlords in the public and around town. But I'm not here to make friends, I'm here to get stuff done and I hope you are too. We need change now, the people can't wait. Please vote yes and pass the HOME Act.