

May 12, 2023



Good Morning Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and members of the Housing Committee,

My name is Michael Beck, and I'm the Advocacy Team Lead for Dignity First, a Bangor-based nonprofit creating a village of permanent supportive tiny homes for unhoused people and intentional neighbors.

I am here to speak in strong support for LD1710. I know you have heard a lot of arguments today about the details and benefits of this bill, so I want to take a different approach and ask you a simple question: What kind of society do we want to live in?

Do we want to live in a society where human life is cheap and disposable? Where people are denied access to essential services and resources? Where people who struggle to make ends meet through no fault of their own are evicted from their homes and left to fend for themselves on the streets? Or do we want to live in a society where human life is valued and respected? Where everyone has a right to basic necessities like food, health care, and housing? No one is asking for these things to be free; we are just asking for them to be affordable.

I think we all know which scenario is best for Mainers. We all agree that human life is sacred and precious. Programs that provide food stamps, Medicaid, and Social Security are not enough. These are not solutions. These are band-aids that cover up the wounds of a broken system.

The system is broken when people who work full-time or even multiple jobs cannot afford to pay their rent. The system is broken when landlords can raise their rents arbitrarily or evict their tenants without cause or compassion. The system is broken when housing is treated as a commodity or a luxury rather than a human right.

LD1710 is a step towards fixing this system. It is a step towards creating a society where everyone has access to safe, decent, and affordable housing. It is a step towards ensuring that no one has to choose between paying their rent or buying their groceries. It is a step towards preventing homelessness, poverty, and suffering.

LD1710 is not asking landlords to be charitable or altruistic. It is asking them to be fair and reasonable. It is asking them to participate in a program that will guarantee their income and protect their property while also helping their tenants stay in their homes.

LD1710 is not asking taxpayers to shoulder an unreasonable burden. It is asking them to invest in the future of our state and our people. It is asking them to support a program where the return on that investment is stronger families, healthier residents, and more prosperous communities where stably housed people can keep their jobs and live a life of dignity instead of insecurity and fear.

LD1710 is not asking you to do something radical or unprecedented. It is asking you to do something moral and sensible. It is asking you to do something that has been done successfully in other states. It is asking you to do something that will make a difference in the lives of thousands of Mainers.

Please vote ought to pass on LD1710.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak.
Michael Beck