

Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and honorable members of the Committee on Housing. My name is Steven Santiago. I am a college student living in Orono and I am here to testify in favor of LD 1710.

All people deserve a home. All people need shelter. In our ideals of American justice, those of liberty, fairness, equality, and recently equity, we are pushed to adopt a framework that involves making darn sure that the rights and liberties of Americans are well met. However, there are people out there that are not well-met with their privileges and immunities of being a citizen both of the United States and of the State of Maine.

Housing is the issue before us. We have the opportunity to make a change. We have the opportunity to choose whether we make it easier to access housing. We must choose to do so. This is only within our pursuit of justice. To close our access to shelter would be to make a choice that aligns towards endless suffering, aligns toward hatred, aligns towards a state that is cruel to some but not to others. A discriminatory state. This is not the America I found myself yearning for when I choose to engage with civic life. This is not the United States ideal I believe in. I also don't think the people of this state are keen on practicing state-sanctioned discrimination.

I myself have struggled to find affordable housing. The only reason I can afford to live where I do, is but for the fact my grandparents are gracious enough to provide rental support. This pattern cannot continue however, and is forcing me to move back into my parents house. I need affordable housing because I want to live for myself, and when we're with family, we're limited by familial obligation. I want a life for myself, and independent housing is the gateway to that life.

We must make housing more accessible. LD 1710 aims to do just that. This moves our state towards an end state that seeks to do justice by its people. This is the state I want to live in. This is the state I believe we can get to. But we must act today. Pass LD 1710 today.

Thank you.