

Good Morning Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and honorable members of the Committee on Housing: my name is Hazel Willow, I am a part of the Address Confidentiality Program here in the state so I do not share my municipality typically but I am also currently unhoused and I am here today to testify in favor of LD 1710.

In July 2020 I came home to Maine. My Spousal Abuser, I, and our newly minted 2 year old brought our Boston salaries up to Auburn and rented a \$1,400-a-month 4 bedroom one bath cape. Just less than a year later, in June 2021, my spousal abuser plunged our life into permanent chaos by getting us evicted from that rental property, an intentional tactic many abusers perpetuate on their co-parents in an effort to maintain power and control over them and their lives. My child and I have not had stable housing since. I wasn't able to find affordable housing then, with my \$75,000 a year salary; I remain unable to find affordable housing now.

I have been trying since January of this year to find safe, stable housing for my young child and I have been unsuccessful. I have a Housing Choice Voucher and yet I cannot find anywhere to accept it. None of the private rental groups or owners have a rental rate that can be covered by the Voucher Payment Standard. Additionally because of the financial abuse my spouse perpetrated upon me my credit score is another barrier when looking to rent from private entities. I'm on over a dozen waiting lists for different Subsidized Housing Properties in 1/3 of the counties here in Maine. There is no county where I can find a safe home for us. There is no unit available for my child and I to ground and center ourselves, to have respite and solace as we recover from Domestic Abuse.

My child has spent half of his young life unhoused, a painful reality for me to endure. Like many unhoused Mainers and Domestic Abuse survivors it is not a reality I ever expected to find myself in, let alone with my child. We have no home to recover in. No haven in which to let our nervous systems decompress, no kitchen in which to make memories. No walls to exasperatedly wash marker off of, no tub to give my child a bath in and no room to read him a story in before bed.

I ask that you support LD1710 not just for the countless Maine adults who aren't able to fully participate in life because of their housing insecurities but for the children of Maine who deserve to have a clean, safe, warm, secure place to play with their Transformers, have a dance party, and sleep soundly at night. Thank you for your time.