

Testimony in support of LD 1710  
Selma Tinta  
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Good morning Senator Teresa Pierce, Representative Gere, and all members of the housing committee:

My name is Selma Tinta, I live in south Portland. I'm from Angola, and I've been here for one year. I'm married and I have 2 children. I will share my own story and from my community.

Since I arrived in Portland, Maine my family and I started experiencing homelessness. I remember, when I arrived in Maine in the middle of a snowstorm and my daughter asked us "where ARE we?" It was funny and scary. We went to the Shelter then, they put us in the hotel and we lived there for nine months. Looking for a house every single day, as an asylum seeker everything becomes more difficult. For example, to find an affordable and safe house to call our home. Because it's a long process until we might get our work permit and without it we're not allowed to go and find a job. And I learned that those who don't have income can't have a house unless they get help from organizations or "General Assistance ". I thank God because I had a place to stay and after 9 months I got an apartment with the help of Greater Portland Family Promise. So, I confess that we have never been so humiliated and we are still getting benefits from GA while we're waiting for work authorization. As an immigrant when we arrived here, all that we wanted was security and to feel safe. But for many of us it is far from the reality.

Many families are still living in shelters, some families bouncing from place to place with kids and babies. Parents and children go into a depression without knowing what is really happening by changing schools, hotels or churches every week or every month.

How can families in these conditions improve or move themselves? Every appointment that we have to go to the G A office we are scorned. They don't care about our feelings, and mental health.

Our wish is that we start working as soon as possible. On the other hand, in Maine, houses are very expensive. Getting a first job here with a great salary to afford it and other important necessities is almost impossible.

Because, once we start working GA denied the assistance. I urge that LD1710 pass and families can get or keep affordable houses. I have a friend who has a family of 5. He started work two months ago, and his assistance has already stopped. Consequently, next month he and his family will have to leave their house because he has a low income and the rent is high. He can't afford it. If LD1710 passes, families all over the state who can't afford the high rents can have peace and stop living in fear and anxiety. Families can keep the house where they are living because finding another one is difficult. Life is more than paying rent. It is to live with peace, working, improving and enjoying with family.

Thank you!