

Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and honorable members of the Committee on Housing. My name is Megan Smith, I live in Milford, and I am here to testify in favor of LD 1710.

I believe that housing is a human right and that it is the responsibility of our elected officials to make sure that Maine families and individuals can afford to live in the state.

Maine's rental housing market is one of the least affordable in the country. This is no longer just a Southern Maine issue as prices have significantly increased in every county across the state. Because it is more common for low-income Mainers to rent than own, rising rental costs are creating a hardship for families and individuals that have the least resources.

Many years ago, I was a young single mother who faced the struggle of finding affordable housing for myself and my daughter. It is from this experience that I know what it is like to live in fear of not being able to afford next month's rent. I remember the constant anxiety of deciding which bills I could skip for the month, or whether I ate dinner each night, to make sure that I could pay my rent on time. The many years that I faced housing insecurity created a tremendous strain on both my mental and physical health and I would not wish that experience on anyone.

Today there is a housing shortage that has taken many years to get to the crisis that we are experiencing today. The pandemic helped to shine a spotlight on the issue of housing insecurity in Maine. When Maine families, especially those with limited resources, have access to safe and affordable housing it benefits all communities by building our workforce, strengthening our schools, and providing opportunities that power our local economy.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak in front of this committee today and am urging you to support LD1710

Thank You,

Megan Smith