

Testimony in support of LD 1710
Marshall G. Mercer
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Grand rising Senator Pierce, Representative Gere & the Honorable Chairs of the housing committee.

My name is Marshall G. Mercer. I am the Executive Director of Hope Brokers Inc. We are a 501 3)c nonprofit that focuses on creating spaces for the marginalized community of Maine. But our office & I reside in the state capitol.

I am here to speak on behalf of LD 1710. If this bill would pass it would be a game changer for those who live here in Maine that work full-time jobs, while trying to support their education, or trying to feed their children but can't afford the rent, because of it constantly being jacked up by greedy real estate agents that don't even live in our great city of Augusta. I myself constantly have to choose between food that has to go in my stomach or gas that goes in my truck, while spending 70 hrs a week doing outreach and training the community in relational organizing, creating listening forums to hear and act on the barriers my community members are faced with.

I barely make it & I know how to navigate through the resources. I am often showing members of the marginalized community how to as well. Yet it still is a hard task for me. This leads me to think about the obstacles of my friends that are un-housed today. They are literally under the mercy of this committee now. Most of them don't even have a pot to piss in. Literally. Or are even able to get into half of these establishments around here today for X Y & Z reasons. If passed, this bill would:

- Prohibit housing discrimination- which means landlords couldn't refuse to rent to someone who uses Section 8, GA, or any other housing program,
- Create a rental assistance program,
- Make changes to the real estate transfer tax, and
- Provide consumer protection

For years now people & organizations have been making too much money off the backs of your constituents. Those are the people I am here to speak for today.

Thank you.

Executive Director of Hope Brokers Inc
Marshall G. Mercer