

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

I strongly believe that **Housing is a Human Right**. 15 years as Planning Director in Lewiston (and two terms on the Lewiston City Council) and 12 years as Executive Director of a Federally-Qualified Health Center in Lewiston and other municipalities has made clear how important safe, affordable and decent housing is to so many aspects of life, like health care, family wellbeing, food security and economic stability. The organization I belong to, Maine People's Alliance, was founded in Lewiston 40 years ago around a kitchen table in Lewiston talking about Housing issues. Unfortunately, we are still talking about them. Let us act now by supporting LD 1710!

A housing shortage and now crisis was obviously many years in the making. The pandemic has further pushed the longtime housing shortage to the crisis level. Maine is clearly vulnerable to a wave of evictions that further this crisis. Nearly 60% of extremely low-income families contribute 50% of their income to rent housing, often going without other basic necessities. That is NOT right! Section 8 has not adequately addressed this issue.

Evictions are traumatic events. They often cause families to lose their possessions, damage their family and community ties, harm their health and reduce workforce and school participation. We must prevent such needless harm.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak in front of your Committee and strongly encourage you to support this critical housing bill. I am prepared to attempt to answer any questions you may have. Thank you!

Jim Lysen
Lewiston