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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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**Testimony of Representative Traci Gere Introducing LD 1931,
An Act to Foster Stable and Affordable Home Ownership in Mobile Home Parks by
Amending the Laws Relating to the Sale of Mobile Home Parks
May 23, 2023**

Good afternoon Senator Pierce and fellow members of the Joint Select Committee on Housing. I am Representative Traci Gere, and I represent House District 134, which encompasses Kennebunkport and coastal Biddeford and Kennebunk. I am before you today to present LD 1931, which proposes that mobile home park owners be required to give notice to park residents of the intent to sell the park, give residents an opportunity to make an offer themselves, and give them a reasonable amount of time to provide that offer to the owner.

This bill does not require that the owner accept that offer – it does not establish a right of first refusal. Rather, it makes sure that mobile home park residents are provided with the option to purchase when faced with an imminent change to the ownership of their park.

It would provide a 60-day window for good faith negotiations between the residents and the current owner, and if the owner accepts the offer from the residents or their association, it provides 90 days from the execution of the purchase and sale for the group to secure financing.

Mobile homes make up 8% of residential dwellings in Maine, the highest proportion in the northeast. They are an important component of our affordable housing stock, and they are often available at lower monthly payments than other rental options. Indeed, we have learned in this very committee from mobile home park owners and residents about the role of mobile homes in meeting the housing needs of people with low incomes, including many older people. Nationwide median household income of manufactured home residents is \$30,000 per year, which is less than half of the median household income of an owner of a single-family home.

The sale of a mobile home park can create an especially difficult situation for residents. It costs \$5,000-10,000 to move a mobile home, and many residents simply can't afford to move their unit to another park. Often, the condition of older mobile homes precludes a move, since moving could render them unusable. When new owners increase pad rents and fees, residents can be left unable to pay their pad rent and can face eviction.

In our overheated housing market where investors are buying up residential property as an asset play, we should be considering what is fair and helpful to people trying to stay in their homes, and make sure they are given notification and time to explore their options, access technical assistance, and secure financing if they make an offer that is accepted. New Hampshire,



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Vermont, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Colorado and Oregon are among states that already have laws that have been effective in helping residents buy their parks.

As we work to preserve affordable housing, it's vital that we help those at risk of losing their homes and make sure they have rights and their rights are protected. This bill takes a similar approach as the work that we have supported that is being done by Maine State Housing Authority and the Genesis Fund to rescue USDA and HUD properties. You will hear today and in written testimony from a number of organizations who are helping Maine residents consider their options, form associations if they so desire, and obtain financing.

In our work in the Housing committee, we have talked with mobile home park owners and residents who have mutually respectful and beneficial relationships. This bill would create a clear process and duties when the sale of a park is being considered, enabling owners to benefit from the sale of their property while protecting the rights and homes of their residents.

I urge the committee to support the passage of LD 1931.

I am available to answer any questions. I thank the Committee for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Traci Gere".

Traci Gere
State Representative