

MacMaster, Marianne

From: Carol O'Donnell <carolo@maine.edu>
Sent: Sunday, February 4, 2024 3:56 PM
To: HOU
Subject: Testimony in support of L.D. 2169

This message originates from outside the Maine Legislature.

Dear Senator Pierce, Representative Gere and members of the Joint Select Committee on Housing,

My name is Carol O'Donnell. I am Co-Chair of the Southern Midcoast Housing Collaborative and a member of the Brunswick Housing Committee. The Southern Midcoast Housing Collaborative is comprised of numerous agencies in the southern midcoast that serve people who are housing insecure or at risk of becoming housing insecure. The Brunswick Housing Committee strives to increase the range of housing options for various income levels.

I am writing to lend my support for L.D. 2169, An Act to Support the Development of Workforce Housing to Promote Economic Development in Maine.

Many employers throughout Maine have been discouraged by the current job market as many positions have been vacated or remain empty because employee wages are not sufficient to afford the increasing cost of housing. Southern Midcoast Housing Collaborative members have seen this first hand in our communities. We are home to several large employers, including Bath Iron Works, Bowdoin College, Mid Coast Hospital, and LL Bean as well as smaller employers such as our local municipalities, including our schools, police and public safety departments who have shared the difficulty they are facing filling well paying positions.

We have heard more than one story of local employers who have recruited well qualified individuals who have had to turn down the position due to lack of workforce housing, or are living in cars, local hotels or homeless shelters while searching for housing. These are individuals with income levels too high to qualify for low income housing, but too low to access the current market rate housing of our area.

The bill's proposed approach would address a barrier cited by developers and housing authorities who have shared that, due to high interest rates and building costs, they cannot afford to build housing that would be affordable for employees who earn 60% to 120% of AMI.

In addition to our economic concerns, we are also concerned that the lack of workforce housing is interfering with the ability of our public safety, public education and healthcare partners to staff at levels required to provide base level services to our communities.

Please vote Ought to Pass on L.D.2169 as one piece of the puzzle to providing workforce housing and promoting economic development in Maine.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Carol O'Donnell
Co-Chair, Southern Midcoast Housing Collaborative
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