

*131<sup>st</sup> Legislature*  
*Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs*  
*Testimony of Norm Maze, Augusta Housing, April 1, 2024*  
*in favor of the Governor's Change Package to LD 2214 (The Supplemental Budget)*

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs. My name is Norm Maze, and I'm the executive director of Augusta Housing.

Augusta Housing was created by the Augusta City Council to help address the housing needs facing for low and moderate income individuals and families in the Augusta area. Since its inception in 1979, the housing authority has expanded beyond the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program to administer a growing portfolio of affordable housing programs and developments. To better promote and expand housing opportunities in the capital region, Augusta Housing began developing affordable housing in 2014 and has successfully constructed senior and workforce housing projects since that time. The housing authority currently has another affordable housing development for families under construction, and another for seniors is being developed. We are planning to develop even more affordable housing, and this additional funding will make that possible.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you in favor of the Governor's Change Package to LD 2214, the supplemental budget. The Change Package allocates \$11 million in funding for the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program, and \$11 million for the Rural Affordable Rental Housing program.

Please support this budget proposal because housing is the best onetime investment you can make, with the most long-term rewards for Maine people. Your legacy can be building homes that will last for generations of Maine people.

This new investment can quickly be put to use building affordable homes. There are affordable housing projects across Maine that are ready to begin construction, if this funding is made available.

The need for more affordable units in the Augusta area and across the state is sorely needed. In 2021, Augusta Housing determined that Augusta needed another 449 family units and 424 senior units; Gardiner needs 85 family units and 98 senior units.

As one of many public housing authorities across the state, we continue to award eligible housing applicants with our Housing Choice Vouchers. Most of these applicants have waited two to three-plus years for a rental voucher. All too often these newly awarded voucher holders exhaust their 120-day look period without finding rental housing and must start over on the wait list. Out of the nearly 20 vouchers we recently awarded, we expect fewer than five households to find housing.

The funding the Governor has dedicated to affordable housing in the past few years will go a long way to increasing the success of our voucher holders and this additional funding in the Governor's proposed change budget will take us even further toward our goal of seeing that all Mainers have a home.

We understand there are competing demands during the budget process, but housing is the foundation for addressing these other needs. Housing means health and economic opportunity for residents. Not having housing creates far greater and costly demands on our state. Now more than ever, Maine must align around prioritizing affordable housing.

Thank you for your time, attention and consideration of this opportunity for you to leave a legacy of providing homes for all people in Maine.