



Connecting Communities to Capital

Testimony of Liza Fleming-Ives

On behalf of the Genesis Community Loan Fund

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

In Support of Parts BBBB and AAAA of the Change Package to LD 2214, An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds and to Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025

April 1, 2024

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, my name is Liza Fleming-Ives. I serve as the Executive Director of the Genesis Community Loan Fund, which has been a community development lender for over 30 years.

Genesis is deeply committed to addressing Maine's affordable housing crisis by providing financing and offering project-planning expertise to communities. Our work helps attract additional resources and builds momentum for projects.

Today, I am here in support of Parts BBBB and AAAA of the Change Package to the Governor's Supplemental Budget proposal.

Part BBBB would add \$5 million to create a housing preservation fund to support the purchase of mobile home parks by their residents. Mobile home parks provide a critical source of affordable housing for thousands of Maine people, including many living on fixed incomes.

Residents in investor-owned parks face unique vulnerabilities when renting the sites on which they place their homes: sudden and unreasonable rent increases and the potential for change of use closures leading to expensive displacement of residents and possible loss of homes. These risks are especially high when there's a change in park ownership (as experienced recently by residents of two mobile home communities in Wiscasset).

The Genesis Fund has been a leader in supporting resident-ownership of mobile home communities in Maine for over a decade and has helped finance the resident-purchase of ten communities with almost 500 households. We've seen how resident ownership has helped preserve the long-term affordability of these communities, stabilizing lot rents and allowing for infrastructure improvements.

In a market in which park valuations have skyrocketed and interest rates are high, the proposed housing preservation fund will be a critical source of support for the resident-purchase of additional communities like four in the state now that are facing a change in ownership. The funds will help leverage and complement other financing to help make those purchases possible.

In addition, I urge you to support Part AAAA of the Change Package as well. While the Legislature has made historic investments in housing over the last four years, we remain decades behind in creating the new housing supply we need.

Fortunately, developers and communities across the state are putting plans in place to create new units. Through a contract with MaineHousing, the Genesis Fund is working with municipalities, community organizations and small-scale developers, particularly in rural areas, to provide guidance to put projects together and access funding through programs like the Rural Affordable Rental Housing Program. In addition to six new projects awarded funding from that program last week, we know of another 10 projects with a high degree of readiness that could move forward as soon as new funding is available.

We urge the Committee to add \$22 million in one-time funding to build more housing in Maine. There is a pipeline of projects ready to be built (in communities like Houlton, Winslow, Rockland, Poland, Norway and Springvale). This timely funding will ensure that we don't lose any momentum in the progress we're making to increase our supply of high-quality, energy-efficient affordable homes.

Please continue to build on this Legislature's commitment to addressing our affordable housing crisis. Thank you. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.