

Testimony for Change Package 4.1.24

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs and distinguished members of the joint standing committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs. My name is Sandra Ossolinski. I currently serve as the interim president of Seacoast Village Cooperative. I am here in support of the Change Package to the Governor's Supplemental Budget proposal.

I have been a resident of Old Orchard Village, a family owned mobile home park, for 4 years. The park is well maintained and the current owners are a blessing. They are local, know everything about maintaining our homes and are available 24-7, with an answering service after hours.

We are currently in the process of trying to purchase the park. We have put our offer in, and are awaiting a response.

One of the biggest benefits of resident owned communities is the ability to control our rent. Large companies can and usually do, raise the rents rapidly because they want/need a profit. If residents owned, we could control our rent increases simply by the fact that we do not need to make a profit. In many instances, the rent can decrease over time.

I mention rent decreasing as we have a number of elderly living in the park. As I went around the park trying to get petitions signed so that we could move forward with an offer, quite a few residents were crying, stating if the rent increases much more they will either be homeless, or be unable to afford food and/or their medication. I tried to reassure them that we would do everything in our power to keep the rent as low as possible.

For this and other reasons, I strongly urge the legislature to include a \$5 million allocation of funds to Maine Housing to help to purchase our mobile home parks and protect their affordable housing. Thank you for your time.