

Testimony presented by Robyn Wardell on behalf of Liza Fleming-Ives, Executive Director, Genesis Community Loan Fund

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development

In support of LD 255, "An Act to Support Mobile Home Residents in Purchasing Their Mobile Home Parks"

March 11, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Curry, Representative Gere and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development,

My name is Robyn Wardell, and I am the Senior Program Officer of the Genesis Community Loan Fund. I am here to testify on behalf of our Executive Director, Liza Fleming-Ives, in support of LD 255, "An Act to Support Mobile Home Residents in Purchasing Their Mobile Home Parks."

At Genesis, we believe that it's essential to preserve existing affordable homes, including those in mobile home communities. Mobile home communities provide stable, low-cost housing for thousands of Mainers, yet they remain vulnerable to ownership changes that can threaten their ongoing affordability.

Maine has 476 mobile home communities, home to approximately 20,000 residents. Most residents own their mobile homes but rent the lots beneath them, leaving them at risk of rent increases, displacement, or conversion of the property to other uses. The loss of these communities to out-of-state corporate investor ownership is already impacting hundreds of Maine families, making it harder for them to stay in their homes.

On the other hand, resident ownership offers stability, security, and long-term affordability.

We have already seen powerful examples of resident-ownership success stories here in Maine. Last October, residents of Blueberry Fields Cooperative in Brunswick successfully purchased their 278-home community, ensuring those homes remain affordable.

More recently, just weeks ago, residents of Cedar Falls Mobile Home Park in Bangor took ownership of their 129-home community, with plans to add more than 70 additional homes. As one community resident put it, *"Now I don't have to worry about someone coming in, buying the land, and kicking us all out. I don't have to worry about a huge rent increase or not having any place to go."*

Maine lawmakers took an important step in 2023 by enacting a law requiring owners of mobile home communities to notify residents when an owner intends to sell, ensuring that residents have the opportunity to organize and submit a purchase offer.

The Legislature also created the **Mobile Home Park Preservation Fund**—a critical tool that fills financial gaps, leverages private lending from community banks and institutions, and helps stabilize costs for residents.

This fund has already helped secure nearly 500 affordable homes for Maine families. It is a proven model for how public-private partnerships can mobilize resources to support resident ownership. However, additional funding is needed.

LD 255 proposes a one-time \$3.5 million allocation to the Fund, which is essential to its continued success.

With your support for the Mobile Home Park Preservation Fund we can make sure that Maine preserves stable, affordable mobile home housing in the years ahead. LD 255 is a smart investment, and we urge you to vote in favor.

Thank you for your time and consideration.