



Testimony of Liza Fleming-Ives
On behalf of the Genesis Community Loan Fund
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development

In opposition to LD 1067
"An Act to Improve the Process for Mobile Home Owners to Purchase their Mobile Home Park"

April 1, 2025

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

My name is Liza Fleming-Ives. I'm the executive director of the Genesis Community Loan Fund.

At Genesis, we believe that it's essential that we preserve existing affordable homes that Maine people already live in, including those in mobile home communities.

Mobile home communities provide a low-cost housing option for thousands of Mainers, yet residents remain vulnerable to housing displacement and sudden rent increases, especially when communities are sold to new investor owners.

Resident ownership of mobile home communities offers a solution that creates stability, security, and long-term affordability. Maine currently has 12 resident-owned communities – from Veazie to Arundel –operating to keep their parks affordable for the 921 families that live there. Genesis has provided financing to all 12 of these communities, the first one organized and financed 16 years ago.

Maine lawmakers took an important step in 2023 to support resident ownership through the State's Opportunity to Purchase law, which requires owners to notify residents when they intend to sell, ensuring that residents have the opportunity to organize and submit a purchase offer.

We have seen how this law has already allowed two communities – one in Brunswick and the other in Bangor – to move forward with purchases in the face of potential corporate investor sales. A third community is under contract now and expected to close this spring.

Through OTP, residents have just 60 days to make an offer. Often this process starts with a few individuals in a community who take the initiative to organize their neighbors. They build momentum and participation over time. As Ronnie Pinkham, President of the Board of the new Cedar Falls Mobile Home Cooperative in Bangor shared recently, many of the residents there thought the initial notice was junk mail, and at their first meeting there were just seven



residents. But more and more residents got involved as they went along once neighbors started talking to neighbors door-to-door, sometimes in sub-zero temperatures.

This bill, LD 1067, would unnecessarily constrain mobile home owners from communicating with their neighbors to determine if and how they want to purchase the land under their homes.

Limiting the number of contacts between neighbors reaching out to neighbors goes in the wrong direction, potentially preventing these homeowners from discussing the possibility of local control. Buying a park is an important decision, and more communication should be encouraged, not discouraged. Imposing an arbitrary limit on these conversations would be a disservice to homeowners. (Imagine other Maine homeowners in stick-built homes or condos being told how often they could talk to their neighbors about issues of common concern!)

Furthermore, increasing the percentage of residents who must sign a petition in order make an offer would only make it harder for homeowners to exercise this opportunity. Once a majority of homeowners are on board, they should be allowed to proceed. Experience shows that participation grows as the residents go through this process. The current threshold works fine, and need not be revised.

With this vital source of affordable housing at risk of corporate investor buyout all over Maine, we must work to facilitate local ownership, not stand in its way. The legislature should not put additional roadblocks in the way of making resident-ownership possible.

I urge you to vote OUGHT NOT TO PASS for this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I'd be happy to answer any questions.