

To the Esteemed Members of the Maine State Legislature,

Good Afternoon. My name is Judy DiVincenzo and I live in a beautiful mobile home community called Sunrise Hill in Berwick Maine. It is a 55 plus community of only 40 homes within the park. I am hoping that my story will show complete support for any legislation that helps residents in Mobile Home Parks keep their cost of living at a lower level.

In December, 2023 the residents received a letter from the owner of that time that the park was up for sale with a valid purchase and sales. The concerned residents of this park quickly met and began the formation of a cooperative working with Pat Schwebler and Nora Gosselin of the Cooperative Development Institute (CDI). We did successfully form the Sunrise Hill Cooperative and obtained an attorney with the assistance of CDI. We put forth a valid offer to purchase the park and matched the sales price from the other party of 3.2 million dollars.

The attorney for the park owner came back to us with a counter-offer for that same sales price but with a \$50,000.00 non-refundable deposit. The other offer on the table also had a non-refundable deposit as a part of their sale. That part of the counteroffer stopped us in our tracks because we could not get financing with that contingency. We then dissolved the Sunrise Hill Cooperative Board and returned any funds collected to residents who had joined the cooperative. The final sale, however, never took place and the owner did not sell to the other party at that time. There was also no communication with the residents as to the state of any sale.

The residents did not hear anything further until we received a letter in October, 2024 that the park was again being sold. Concerned residents contacted both Pat Schwebler and Nora Gosselin of CDI about the sale. Nora of CDI was able to obtain a copy of the new purchase and sales which was with Francoeur Realty Trust for a sales price of three million dollars with a non refundable deposit of \$50,000. We again organized a full resident meeting and formed a new Sunrise Hill Cooperative and a new Board of Directors. Both myself as the new president of the Sunrise Hill Cooperative and Nora Gosselin contacted the seller to see if he was willing to work with the residents to sell the park to us. He indicated that the timing and the refundable deposit were very workable.

We worked with CDI and the newly hired attorney to create a new offer to the park seller. That offer was for 3.1 million dollars and a refundable deposit of \$75,000.00. Both of these factors were discussed with the park seller at length.

Shortly after the offer was presented, the seller came back to us through his attorney that the sales price was acceptable but we needed to change the deposit to a \$25,000.00 non-refundable deposit and a \$50,000 refundable deposit. The seller's attorney informed the attorney representing the cooperative that if the community could not pass the hat around and raise that \$25,000.00, then how could they purchase the park. CDI assists with the financing and the cooperative to get all of the financing to include all inspections and a

sum for any initial improvements needed to meet all of the needs of the lending institution. What that means is that the residents only cost is a total of one hundred dollars to be a member of the Sunrise Hill Cooperative. If for any reason that inspections indicate that there are serious issues within the park and the cooperative does not close, any fees incurred during the financing period are absorbed by CDI. So there is virtually little risk to the residents in obtaining the purchase of their park.

Non-refundable deposits on this type of sale is a way to avoid a sale to the residents and skirts the law that a notice of sale has to be provided to all residents with timing for them to form a cooperative and make a valid purchase offer.

The sale of mobile home parks has become an issue in recent years. Mobile Home parks have become known as a cash cow for investors, since there is little maintenance involved in owning one since the buildings are independently owned. My husband and I owned a new manufactured home in Kittery, Maine. That all ages park was sold to a company out of California, called Boa Vida. We decided to sell this home and rented for one year. When we sold our home in November of 2022, our lot rent was at \$510.00 per month plus a monthly charge for water and sewerage. The new owners of our home had to agree to a lot rent of \$650.00 per month plus a charge for water and sewerage that averaged around \$60.00 per month. That lot rent is now at \$715.00 per month plus water and sewerage charges.

Living in a mobile home park is supposed to be affordable housing. We have residents in our community that are well into their 80's and 90's. We need to make changes to keep this form of living affordable. The right of first refusal is an integral part of that. It will help keep affordable housing in Maine affordable. The Way Life Should Be.

Thank you all for your time and I hope that you will all agree to support this legislation.

Sincerely,

Judy Divincenzo