



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

In support of LD 1145
"An Act to Protect Residents Living in Mobile Home Parks"

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.

As an organization dedicated to the preservation of affordable housing, Genesis strongly supports opportunities for residents to purchase the land underneath their mobile homes as resident-owned communities.

We have financed the resident purchase of all 12 mobile home communities in Maine – from Veazie to Arundel – and we have seen how resident ownership is a solution that has been able to keep communities affordable. We've also seen what these communities are up against when they are suddenly forced to compete with an out-of-state investor buyer.

Maine lawmakers took an important step in 2023 to create the State's Opportunity to Purchase (OTP) law to support resident-ownership. That law has already allowed two communities – one in Brunswick and the other in Bangor – to move forward with purchases in the face of potential sales to corporate investors. A third community is under contract now and expected to close this spring.

Despite these successes, it's clear that additional action is needed to address the unfortunate continued pattern of sales to corporate investors, even with the current OTP law in place.

Since Maine's OTP law went into effect, nine communities, home to over 1,200 families, have received sale notices, gotten organized, and submitted purchase offers to sellers. But only three resident offers were accepted while six communities (with over 840 home sites) have been sold to investor buyers. The law as written, especially the lack of clarity around the meaning of the words *consider* and *good faith*, has unfortunately allowed some sellers to pass over matching or even superior offers from resident groups.



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We encourage the Committee to consider and support turning the current Opportunity to Purchase into a Right of First Refusal, to give Maine residents the first chance to secure the ownership, stability and affordability of their homes for their future.

I understand there may be other bills to get at Right of First Refusal coming before the Committee soon, and we encourage you to consider these bills together to determine the best vehicle to move this idea forward.