

April 11, 2025

Testimony in support of LD 1479, "An Act to Protect Senior Homeowners in Home-sharing Agreements by Providing for an Expedited Eviction Process "

Good afternoon Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary. I am here to testify in support of LD 1479.

My name is Paul Armstrong and I live in the town of Palermo in Waldo County. I am one the constituents who brought this issue to Representative Smith's attention after I went through the nightmare of trying to evict someone whom I had rented a room to in my own home. This testimony is also on behalf of another senior who also went through a horrible experience with another tenant.

I personally lobbied here in the state house for the Home Share bill, which is now being run through Nesterly. This program will help many seniors and disabled and those in need of affordable housing get together. Home Sharing is aimed at helping seniors rent out a room in their homes at a discounted rate in exchange for help around the home along with companionship to fight isolation.

In Maine even renting a single room in your own domicile makes you a full fledged landlord according to the law- on par with someone renting a complex full of apartments.

My going through the eviction process was a long and costly ordeal, not to mention the mental and emotional strain of having to share my home with someone who was disrespectful, spiteful, obviously unwanted and fundamentally living there for free during the eviction process. I could not afford to hire a lawyer and proceeded on my own. I tried my best to do the due diligence of learning the proper and legal procedures for executing an eviction. The majority of information I found through contacting professionals, legal services, and searching the internet was geared for the person(s) being evicted not the person(s) looking to evict. I also learned that most of the people facing evictions may receive free legal help and even representation but absolutely nothing of the like available for landlords.

The other gentleman, Stanley Fleming- 81 years old, had thought he had done his best vetting a tenant. This woman even came for a 3 day trial to see if they were compatible. This woman knew the tenancy and eviction laws very well. She had arranged for some mail to arrive at his home while on this trial visit. This mail established her residency unbeknownst to this man. Within a few weeks she stopped paying rent, got demanding, and became troublesome. He asked to speak to her about and which she ~~was~~ refused. The next day he was served with papers saying she had requested a restraining order on him citing that he had "come on to her sexually". This was an attempt to have him removed from his own residence so she could stay there rent free. He, too, got caught up in the pricey court eviction system for months and endured calls to and visits from the police. The restraining order was ultimately denied but and she continued to harass him constantly. In the end she was finally ordered to depart by the police but it took its toll for sure.

I believe that Maine has to review and correct the eviction process especially for the Mainer who wants to rent a room in their own home. The present process is skewed in favor of tenants and is a long process of legal maneuvers. There are many what I call professional evictees around now. They know the laws, thanks to the laxity of the laws during COVID, and exploit them the best they can knowing how long an eviction takes, that they will get free legal consultation, and eventually leave and settle before a judgment so it won't bother them in the future.

I would ask that this bill be amended to add disabled persons with seniors to the definition as many disabled do live alone and qualify for Shared Housing opportunities. I also question the 65 year old portion of this bill as Maine does not have a statutory age for being a senior.

By voting ought to pass on LD 1479, Maine has the opportunity to shorten the eviction process Maine for the better. My thanks to Representative Smith and to you all for your time and consideration.

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