

My name is Jon Diotalevi and I am a Lewiston resident and a first-time home owner of one of the units at 51 Howard street, the building that was rehabbed by Healthy Homeworks last year, and i'm testifying in support for LD 1167

My wife and I knew we wanted to share a multi-unit building with a friend. After looking for a few months, we ran into a common theme. The cost was way too high, even for our combined incomes, even to rehab a cheaper building. We were stuck. Our friend decided to take a look at a condo at 51 Howard. This is when we met Amy and learned all about Healthy Homeworks. We bought into this new type of housing scheme almost immediately.

In our neighborhood in Lewiston the rate of homeownership is only 4%, the rest are renters. Renters who have no control over the building they live in and so no stakes and no responsibility. It is obvious when walking around the neighborhood that this is a problem. Clearly neglected buildings largely owned by distant landlords who's only personal contribution to the community is paying taxes.

A lot of problems with neglect in these old buildings is a lack of accountability and no clear lines for shared responsibility between renter and landlord. For example, if a family lives in a building where the space is already in bad condition and the landlord has no regular contact with the renters. What is the incentive for the renter to take care of that building?

The landlord side of the equation is similar. Why would they bother fixing up a building if they continue to get rent, renter's complaints can be ignored, and the city does not hold a landlord accountable for their property. The city gets the tax revenue, the landlord gets the rent checks. Nothing changes and the cycle continues.

Ownership is more than a document that says "this is yours", it's the responsibility that comes with it. At 51 Howard St. we OWN our unit and co-own the building and property it is on. We all live here and we care about how our property and neighborhood look. It's ours and so we want to make it our own and better. We want to invest our time into our home, not for future profitability but because it is where we live.

We couldn't afford to live here under a traditional housing model. Even with the combined income of three people, buying a building was out of our grasp. Right here is where Healthy Homeworks fills in this access gap. We three adults want to be responsible for a home, and we want to be part of a community. Having Healthy Homeworks take on the cost of repairing a building into move-in shape opens up opportunities for more people to become homeowners who have a difficult time making that first hurdle.

Almost one year into living at 51 Howard St has me sure that this program has long term potential to change the lives of many people across the state. Having access to this kind of permanent housing will provide home ownership opportunities for Mainers of all ages who otherwise would have been priced out. Please support LD1167 .

Thank you