



## **LD 1287: An Act to Support Workforce Development by Establishing the Housing Stability Fund**

Hello, Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee. My name is Claude Rwaganje, and I live in Westbrook, and I am the Executive Director of ProsperityME and President of the Westbrook City Council. I am here today representing ProsperityME and serving all low-income people with housing stability, financial literacy, workforce development, Small Business, Scholarship for higher education for individuals who don't have access to FAFSA and housing services and housing development.

I am here today to testify in support of LD 1287, a bill that will promote housing and workforce stability. This bill is important to me and my community because it will prevent homelessness, stabilize families in their home and support individuals with employment. There is no stability without housing.

Maine is facing a severe labor shortage, which is largely driven by the state's housing crisis. While we work to address the housing shortage through long-term initiatives, we must act NOW to prevent more homelessness and provide stability for Maine families and employers.

- According to the Maine Development Foundation, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Maine's labor force shrank by about 26,000 people. While it has slowly rebounded to near pre-pandemic levels, long-term trends suggest a troubling outlook for the state's workforce.
- A skilled labor force is critical for a strong economy. As baby boomers retire, the number of working-age Mainers continues to decline. Additionally, many young people are delaying entering the workforce to pursue education and training, further contributing to a shrinking labor pool—trends that predate the pandemic.
- To counter these trends, Maine needs to attract more working-age individuals from other states and countries, retain young people born here, and support more Mainers in participating in the workforce.

By supporting LD 1287, we will achieve the following:

- **Stable Housing:** Mainers will have access to affordable housing, which allows families to plan for their futures and remain in their communities.
- **Workforce Retention and Growth:** Employers will be better equipped to retain and attract dependable workers to fill labor gaps in every sector.
- Between 2023 and 2024, a total of 240 low-income households in Southern Maine received help with security deposits, and 109 families accessed short-term rental assistance to serve as a stepping stone to employment and self-sufficiency—using an average of just 4 months of support. These outcomes demonstrate the program's strong impact in delivering targeted, efficient aid that helps families quickly achieve housing stability and financial independence.



By passing LD 1287 and establishing the Housing Stability Support Program and Housing Stability Fund, we can ensure that families remain stably housed and continue contributing to their communities, fostering a stronger economy for Maine.

Mainers have a long history of supporting one another in times of need. LD 1287 strengthens communities by reducing and preventing homelessness for ALL, ensuring everyone has a stable foundation.

Maine's economy can only grow if we grow our population and workforce. The state government must help vulnerable members of our community meet their basic needs—such as housing and employment—so they can contribute to the economy. By investing in housing stability now, we can save the state money in the long run and set ourselves up for future success.

I urge you to vote in favor of LD 1287 and support the well-being of Maine residents. Please help provide stable housing and workforce development for all Mainers.

**Thank you!**

Claude Rwaganje

**Claude Rwaganje**

Executive Director

**ProsperityME**

175 Lancaster Street, Suite 216A

PO Box 8013 Portland, ME 04104

(207) 797-7890 x105

[www.prosperityme.org](http://www.prosperityme.org)