



PINE TREE LEGAL ASSISTANCE, INC.

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In support of LD 1522 "An Act to Establish the Maine Eviction Prevention Program"
April 25, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and distinguished members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee. My name is Kathryn Childs and I am a Managing Attorney at Pine Tree Legal Assistance. I grew up in Kennebec County and currently reside in Palermo with my family. I have been at Pine Tree Legal Assistance for the past ten years. I have represented low-income Mainers in eviction court across the state and am proud to be able to share my experience and those of my colleagues with you this morning.

Since 1967, Pine Tree has represented low-income Mainers in civil legal matters including representing tenants in a range of rental housing matters. In 2024, we assisted low-income Mainers in 4,422 rental housing cases.

Pine Tree supports the continuation of this Eviction Prevention Program because we know how critical it is that low-income families are able to maintain their rental housing, and we have seen directly how the pilot program was able to help low-income families across the state when they otherwise had no hope.

The Eviction Prevention Pilot Program Offered a Lifeline to Families

Pine Tree staff attorneys represent tenants in eviction actions across the state. We help tenants at every stage of the eviction process, from the initial notice of termination, to navigating what to do once a writ of possession is served. I offer you today collective feedback about the Pilot eviction prevention program which this bill would make permanent.

A significant number of the eviction cases Pine Tree sees relate to the nonpayment of rent as the central issue. This is because rent is overwhelmingly unaffordable. The EPP program reduced the number of evictions that took place, whether because they were not filed or because they were dismissed. Once a tenant is behind on their rent, there are few programs to rely on to get back on track. EPP offers a solution that other programs do not.

In one case, a family living in a mobile home park fell on a temporary financial crisis. They owned their mobile home, but got behind in their lot rent. Eviction in a mobile home park is especially devastating, because of the difficulty and expense of having to move a mobile home, which the majority of our clients cannot afford and which eventually means they risk losing the home itself all together. This particular family would never have been able to pay the arrears off on their own. The EPP was able to assist the family to get current and effectively saved their



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forever home. Eviction prevention funds help our state in numerous ways by ensuring that those most vulnerable to becoming homeless are able to remain housed.

Conclusion

The EPP was a bridge that helped many low-income families in Maine remain stably housed, where there were no other options. As we worked toward creating affordable rental housing stock over the next decade, it is imperative that we also ensure that low-income Mainers remain stably housed and avoid the social and economic costs of increased homelessness. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments today. I hope you will vote *ought to pass*.