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**From:** Steve Kenney <stephenkenney7@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 24, 2025 11:30 AM  
**To:** Cmte HED  
**Subject:** Please Don't Make It Harder to Be a Good Landlord – Oppose LD 1534

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**This message originates from outside the Maine Legislature.**

Hello,

My name is Steve Kenney. I'm a lifelong resident of Lewiston-Auburn and a graduate of the University of Southern Maine. I've worked at Tyler Technologies for the past 10 years, and I now also own several multi-family properties in the Lewiston area. I never set out to be a landlord—but I found myself drawn to real estate investing through countless hours of listening to podcasts on my daily commute. What began as curiosity turned into a mission: to provide clean, safe, and affordable housing to the people in my hometown.

Being a landlord is, without question, the hardest thing I've ever done. It's stressful, expensive, overwhelming—and incredibly important. LD 1534 threatens to make it even harder. I'm writing to share my story and to ask, genuinely and humbly, please don't punish small landlords who are trying to do the right thing.

### My First Building

In 2022, I bought my first building: a six-unit property in downtown Lewiston. It had been neglected for years. The roof leaked into tenant apartments. The deck was crumbling and unsafe. There was knob-and-tube wiring—a fire hazard. Smoke detectors didn't work. Maintenance had long been deferred under a previous landlord whose philosophy was “keep rents low, do the bare minimum.” That approach wasn't just outdated—it was dangerous.

I had no choice but to make massive repairs. Not only because it was the right thing to do, but because the bank, the insurance company, and the city inspectors all required it. I had to rebuild the deck, replace the roof, update the wiring, install hardwired smoke detectors, and complete dozens of other urgent fixes. Additionally, insurance premiums are through the roof, utilities are sky-high, and skilled labor is expensive (when you can even find it). To put it lightly, owning an apartment building these days is not cheap.

### The Math Has to Work

I've never taken a paycheck from my rental properties. Every cent of rent goes back into the buildings—repairs, maintenance, property taxes, utilities, snow removal, and saving for big-ticket items like roofs and foundations. I drive a 2015 Toyota Corolla with hubcaps. Most of my tenants drive nicer cars than I do.

People assume landlords are rolling in cash, but most small landlords are barely staying afloat. We're not the problem—we're part of the solution. But only if we're allowed to make the math work. That means raising rents when costs go up. It means having the ability to remove problematic tenants who destroy property or make life miserable for others. It means being trusted to run our businesses responsibly.

## **LD 1534 Will Hurt, Not Help**

Rent control might sound good on paper, but it will hurt the very people it aims to protect. In cities like Lewiston, many buildings are aging and in serious need of investment. The previous generation of "old-school landlords" is aging out, and people like me are stepping in to improve these properties. But we can't do it with our hands tied behind our backs.

If we can't raise rents to keep up with soaring costs, we can't invest in repairs or upgrades. We're forced to do the bare minimum. And if we lose the ability to manage our properties—including evictions when necessary—we lose control of the very asset we're trying to improve.

LD 1534 will freeze the market. It will drive out good landlords and deter new ones from investing in our communities. It won't lead to safer or more affordable housing. It will do the opposite.

## **Let's Work Together**

I agree—housing is too expensive. But the answer isn't to punish the people trying to make it better. Below are some other solutions that could lead to positive change:

- Grants or low-interest loans for critical repairs.
- Incentives for new construction.
- Support for renters without capping rents.
- Easier permitting and zoning reform to build more housing.

We need more good landlords in Maine, not fewer. Please don't push us out. Please don't make it harder for the people trying to do the right thing.

Sincerely,  
**Steve Kenney**  
Lewiston, ME