

Blum, Alyster

From: Stephanie <sannestabrook@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, April 18, 2025 12:09 PM
To: Cmte HED
Subject: Line: Please Oppose LD 1534

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This message originates from outside the Maine Legislature.

Dear Members of the Housing Committee,

My name is Stephanie Estabrook, and I'm a small, private landlord with two buildings in **Westbrook** (a 3-unit and a 5-unit) and one 3-unit building in **Lewiston**. I've spent years pouring sweat equity and personal savings into these properties. I live in the same communities as my tenants. I shovel the walks, fix the plumbing, and take the midnight calls. And I'm writing to ask you to **oppose LD 1534**—because this bill doesn't stabilize housing, it destabilizes the small landlords who are holding the system together.

Let's be real: rent control is a blunt tool being used to solve a complex problem. What this bill really does is **punish the responsible mom-and-pop owners** while institutional landlords walk right through the loopholes.

LD 1534 proposes rent caps of the lesser of CPI or 5%. Let me walk you through what that looks like in practice. In 2024, inflation for utilities in New England rose over 7.2%, insurance premiums for multifamily buildings jumped by **over 10%**, and property taxes in cities like Lewiston and Westbrook increased. But under this bill, if a unit is renting at \$1,000, I'm capped at a **\$50 annual increase**—even if my costs have gone up by **\$200 or more**.

That's not "rent stabilization." That's a math problem with one solution: **small landlords exit the market**.

Worse, LD 1534 hands local municipalities the ability to enforce "**just cause**" **eviction ordinances**, removing essential flexibility from landlords and setting up a maze of red tape. In larger buildings, including my 5-unit, this would tie my hands even when dealing with problem tenants—tenants who might not be paying rent, disrupting neighbors, or putting strain on the very communities this bill claims to protect.

Let me throw you a stat: According to the **U.S. Census Bureau**, 40% of rental units nationwide are owned by individuals—not hedge funds, not REITs. These are regular people with mortgages, kids, and aging roofs to replace. We are the ones keeping housing **local and humane**, not turning it into a commodity traded on Wall Street.

LD 1534 will:

- **Disincentivize future investment in affordable units,**

- Drive out small property owners in favor of deep-pocketed developers,
- Lead to **deferred maintenance** as revenue no longer covers basic upkeep,
- And ultimately **hurt tenants** by reducing the quality and quantity of available housing.

If we're serious about solving Maine's housing crisis, let's talk about expanding supply, streamlining permitting, and incentivizing new construction—not price controls that look good on paper but collapse in reality.

Please stand up for the local owners who are actually invested in Maine's communities. Please vote **NO** on **LD 1534**.

Respectfully,

Stephanie Estabrook