



**Testimony in Opposition to Statewide Rent Stabilization in Maine
Submitted to the Housing and Economic Development Committee
Sara McKee Boyer, Executive Director, Rental Housing Alliance**

April 25, 2025

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and esteemed members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee, my name is Sara McKee Boyer, I am in opposition of **LD 1534**.

I am here today as the Executive Director of the Rental Housing Alliance, representing more than 700 landlords across southern, midcoast, and parts of central Maine. I am also here today as a small housing provider myself, with properties in Westbrook, Poland, and Portland.

As you may know, Portland is one of only two municipalities in Maine with a rent control ordinance in place - **and it already has one of the most restrictive policies in the country. LD 1534 goes even further**, introducing statewide rules that are more stringent than Portland's, including the elimination of no-cause evictions.

We don't have to speculate on what rent stabilization does to communities, Portland has already shown us.

- Property values for multi-units have declined, so much so Portland homeowners have absorbed a tax shift due to the loss in assessed value on rent-controlled units.
- Small landlords have been forced to raise rents annually to keep up with costs, when they otherwise would not have prior to rent control.
- When a tenant voluntarily vacates a unit, the landlord is still not able to bring that unit to market.
- If a landlord removes a unit from the rental market or rents it to a family member for a few years, they are required to return to the original rent amount that was being charged prior - regardless of market changes or rising costs.
- Housing gets inefficiently allocated - rent stabilization often helps the people who do not need it.

- Repairs get delayed, upgrades get postponed, and in time, housing quality suffers

These are not theoretical outcomes - they are measurable impacts. A recent economic analysis showed that Portland's rent control ordinance has raised taxes approximately \$300 per year to the average single-family homeowner.

The process for overseeing rent control is a huge administrative and cost burden. Portland's Rent Control Board has a backlog more than two years long and the only landlords who have the ability to access the complex process are large corporate landlords. The process is far too arduous for small landlords, so they just have to accept the small approved increases and eat the costs that they incur all while taxes, insurance, maintenance, fuel costs and inflation increase.

This is not a sustainable model.

Meanwhile, landlords like myself- who didn't raise rents for years out of fairness are now penalized. I have a three-bedroom unit in Portland that is *\$1,000 under what Maine Housing considers to be affordable*, yet I'm locked into a system where it will take me a full decade to adjust that rent to today's market value.

Most landlords in Maine are not large corporations - they're individuals. Teachers, veterans, retirees - people like myself who invested in housing as their retirement strategy. We maintain our buildings. We respond to emergencies. We balance the books on razor-thin margins. And when government policy caps our income but doesn't cap our costs, we are forced out - making room for corporate operators who can absorb losses and could care less about our communities.

We are currently seeing the market adjust in Maine. Rents have flattened, some housing providers are offering incentives and sitting on vacant units. The market is beginning to self-correct without intervention.

I urge you to look to Portland and consider the long-term consequences of rent stabilization policies. If your goal is more housing, better housing, and affordable housing, we need to support the people who are already providing it and not create policies that push them out.

Thank you for your time today,

Sara McKee Boyer