

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development: my name is Nyawal Lia , I am a resident of Lewiston, ME and I am here today to testify in favor of LD 1723 An Act to Amend the Laws Governing Manufactured Housing Communities to Prevent Excessive Rent and Fee Increases on behalf of the Housing Justice Maine Coalition. I am the statewide coordinator for Housing Justice Maine, a housing coalition that believes housing is a human right. HJM prioritizes actions and policies that support housing as a human right and empower those residents most deeply impacted by an oppressive housing system. LD1723 is one of our top three priority bills this session because it has been so prevalent to so many of our members. Our member organizations include: Community Organizing Alliance, Homeless Voices for Justice, Maine Equal Justice, Maine People's Alliance, Maine Youth Power, Raise-Op Housing Cooperative

I was most moved by what is happening in our mobile home communities here in Maine just last year when I had the pleasure of connecting with someone by the name of Barbra. Barbra has been working for 30 years in non profit, she has been a single mother and until today is still working because they have no choice but to work. Barbra is 59 years old with health issues that have kept her from being here today. She purchased her manufactured home hoping to retire in it. This is no longer the case because the rent in her lot has been bought out by a corporate landlord who has not only changed the rent several times but, when people in her community have questions or concerns about the property, it has been hard to get a hold of this corporate company. In my organizing capacity with Maine People's Alliance Barbara and I really got to work last summer. Barbra started organizing in her community way before she reached out to MPA. She knocked on doors in her community to engage her neighbors about how vital it is for them to come together and try to buy the lot in order to change the outcome of their living conditions. In June of last year she then invited several people in her community to come and strategize about different ways to continue organizing. By the end of this process the previous owner ended up selling to the corporate landlord even though people in the park manage to match the corporate landlord. What this means now is that people in her community are stuck and essentially have to deal with all of the new rules and regulations. Barbra, is not here today but, we have several others who I and my colleges at MPA have been working closely with to track this particularly bill, we have been meeting weekly on zoom eagerly waiting for this day to share all of the devastating experiences elders, people with disabilities, and young families have been enduring in mobile home communities throughout the state and throughout the country. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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