



Good afternoon Chairs Rotundo and Gattine, and distinguished members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee. My name is Amy Smith. I am a Lewiston resident and Executive Director of Healthy Homeworks, a non-profit dedicated to creating pathways to home ownership for first-time buyers.

I support LD 1912, An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Address Maine's Housing Shortage, and thank Senator Bennett for introducing it.

I appreciate that it creatively and specifically addresses the supply side of our housing crisis. Most existing programs for first time home buyers support the demand side, by offering education, down payment assistance, and reduced mortgage interest rates. This can be very effective and useful, but only if there is inventory that buyers can afford to purchase and maintain.

LD 1912 acknowledges that we need to increase attainable inventory by both creating new housing and rescuing old housing, and that we must do it quickly and cost-effectively.

Half of the funding encourages innovation and production of new homes by supporting housing manufacturers. Their efficiency and quality control should result in durable and timely housing stock for the lowest possible new-construction cost. The grant and loan programs specifically encourage creation of "affordable housing units", which typically means rental units. I respectfully suggest that if we are interested in creating attainable units for income-qualified home buyers, that the proposal be modified to include language and incentives to support that goal.

The other half of the funding squarely acknowledges that Maine has an abundance of aging housing stock that could provide quality housing for generations to come, but that the necessary repairs and upgrades are often cost-prohibitive for owners and developers. All three of the programs (repair, weatherization, and the homeownership pilot based on LD 1167) result in targeted and relatively modest grants that go directly to the entities that are closest to the work and can maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of the funding.

I encourage you to support LD 1912 so that our department of Economic and Community Development and Maine Housing Authority can bring their significant expertise to bear, and can fully design and implement these programs as soon as possible.

Respectfully submitted on 5/13/2025  
amy.smth@healthyhomeworks.org