

**Testimony in Support of LD 1927,
An Act to Protect Tenants from Mold and Chronic Dampness
May 12, 2025**

Good afternoon, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. I'm Andrea Steward (she/her/hers) and I'm a resident of Old Town.

For a period of time, I lived in an apartment which had been created when a house was converted into four basement apartments. My experience there left me not only frustrated, but concerned for my health and safety — and I am far from alone.

Water routinely leaked into my apartment through the foundation walls, and under both the walls and the door into my apartment. I had a bookcase near one wall where you could clearly see the water damage rise at least two inches up. The carpet in my living space would become saturated with water whenever this happened. The property management company's response to this ongoing problem was simply to provide blowers and attempt to dry the room out. In fact, the first time I reached out I was told to just "let it dry."

The chronic dampness in the apartment combined with Maine's fluctuating temperatures provided a perfect environment for mold to grow. It grew not only on the rug and in the bathroom, but also on my furniture, clothing, reusable grocery bags, and even surfaces I touched every day. I repeatedly contacted the property management company, but they never responded. After several days of silence, I finally reached out to the landlord directly. Something many of my fellow tenants did not have the luxury of doing since the turnover of tenants in the years since the management company took over when the landlord moved out of state left few knowing who the actual property owner was. When I moved out of the unit in the Summer of 2022, they had decided to replace the carpet with vinyl plank flooring - what I guess was another attempt to hide the real issues

My story is not an isolated one. Last year on a community Facebook group, I saw a post from a family who had to move out of their unit, due to mold, after her husband and child became sick. They first raised a Warranty of Habitability issue to the owner and code enforcement officers and the solution was to "paint over it". The family utilized a voucher and once their unit failed to pass the Section 8 inspection and the landlord refused to fix the issues, they were told they would need to move out. Given our current housing market and the challenges in finding a landlord who will accept vouchers, they ended up at a campground in September. I reached out to them in preparation for this hearing, but they're no longer living in the State.

According to the Maine Indoor Air Quality Council, between July 2024 and today alone, they have recorded 253 calls from tenants dealing with mold problems in their apartments. Our state has a clear mold and dampness problem — and yet, our legal tools to address these issues are woefully inadequate.

Right now, the only recourse tenants have is to sue their landlord. However, to date there have been no successful rulings for tenants who attempt this route. This is not only an inefficient use

of court resources, but it also leaves tenants with no meaningful remedy to ensure their homes are safe and habitable.

LD 1927 offers a much-needed solution. Modeled after Maine's existing bed bug law, the bill clearly establishes the need to address mold and dampness problems in rental properties and lays out a process based on best-practice guidance. Importantly, it sets out shared responsibilities for both landlords and tenants and grants municipalities clear authority to investigate and enforce these provisions.

Responsible landlords — and there are many — will find these requirements reasonable and achievable. In fact, this bill also protects landlords' investments by ensuring that small water and dampness issues are addressed quickly before they escalate into costly repairs and health hazards.

Maine is a cold, wet climate, and as climate change increases the severity of storms and frequency of flooding events, it is essential that building owners are more responsive and better equipped to manage moisture issues. LD 1927 will make sure both landlords and tenants have a clear, fair process to follow.

If LD 1927 had been in place when I lived in that basement apartment, I could have been spared months of exposure to mold and the stress of unresponsive property managers. It would have empowered me, protected my health, and ensured that a timely fix was made to the unit.

I urge you to support LD 1927 to protect the quality of Maine's housing and the health of its residents.

Thank you for your time and I'm happy to answer any questions.





