

Testimony LD 2212 Budget Hearing—Tax Committee  
Susan Kiralis February 19, 2026

Good afternoon Senator Retondo, Representative Gattine, and members of the AFA and Housing Committees.

My name is Susan Kiralis. I live in Vassalboro. I am a mother of two and a small business owner.

I am here today to represent the Aspire Leadership Team, a group of women from across Maine with lived experience of poverty who have spent years working toward economic justice and consulting on policy reform. Our focus has been on basic necessities and system improvements, including TANF, access to education supports, housing, food, health coverage, childcare, and transportation.

Today, we are fighting just to keep what little we have. Maine is becoming harder to live in. Rent is rising. Food is expensive. Our Families are stretched thin trying to make ends meet. Some of the women I work alongside wanted to be here today but could not due to housing loss, lack of childcare, no transportation, fear of speaking publicly, or simply exhaustion.

With that said, I want to acknowledge that it is a privilege for me to bring their voices, and the voices of their families, before you today. Each of these women and myself represent the population that truly pays a higher share of taxes than millionaires in this state. In very simple terms, I want to make the connection clear, when we talk about taxing millionaires, that revenue can be used to strengthen the social safety nets we have long been advocating for, and as often told there's not enough money.

We hear the narrative that if we tax the wealthy or large corporations, they will stop doing business in Maine. This is a false assumption. If we value the people who live here and radically invest in them, corporations will follow that lead. People come to Maine for its culture. That culture is one of our greatest assets and culture only works because of the people who contribute to it.

From my observation, what drives people out of Maine is not taxation of the rich but the lack of means and ways, low wages, high rents, racism, and the brutal winter. We are asking you to tax millionaires and corporations who are profiting in this state while the most vulnerable are rationing groceries, facing eviction, difficulties heating their homes etc. Yes, courage is required, the Aspire Leadership Team, we will continue to organize and speak out. We believe, deeply, that revenue collected from taxing the wealthy must be reinvested in the people who live here. Thank you for your time and consideration.