

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, members of the joint standing committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the joint standing committee of Housing and Economic Development, my name is Sam Lebel. I live in Gray and work in Portland at a Maine-based engineering firm.

I'm here today in strong support of the housing components of the supplemental budget, which puts forth a thoughtful and comprehensive approach to funding new housing stock in response to the 80,000-unit deficit we're currently in. Over the past several years the Legislature has made great strides through zoning reform to create new possibilities across the State for smart-growth housing development. Now is the time to help fund these new opportunities and let the talented developers, architects, engineers, and builders across the State of Maine get to work making new homes for people in their communities.

I see the dire need for housing both on a professional and a personal level. Professionally, working alongside housing developers who help put roofs over people's heads. The waiting lists for example, are often hundreds or thousands of people long. I also see the dire need through many of my colleagues, who despite having well-paid jobs, can not afford to purchase a home within an hour of the office. Same story personally – many of my friends and family (of all ages and backgrounds) continue to struggle to find housing that truly meets their needs.

Without attainable housing, there is no place for young people to stay and grow families. Without attainable housing, there is no workforce, which is the lifeblood of our local economies and communities. Simply put, housing development is economic development.

In these unprecedented times where housing is so desperately needed, it's imperative that we leverage these resources to help solve this massive issue. I would urge this committee to support the housing components of this supplemental budget which represents the ultimate investment in Maine and its people. Thank you for your time, and for your service to our State. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.