



**Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs & the
Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development**

Testimony of Laura Mitchell, Executive Director, Maine Affordable Housing Coalition

2.19.26

In Favor - LD 2212 – Supplemental Budget

Chair Rotundo, Chair Gattine, and members of Appropriations and Housing Committees:

My name is Laura Mitchell, and I'm the executive director of the Maine Affordable Housing Coalition. We have 140 business and 3,000 individual members, and we support building and maintaining affordable Maine homes.

We ask for your support of the proposed \$70 million investment in housing in the Supplemental Budget. The cost of housing has risen at a much higher rate than incomes have increased leaving more and more hard-working Mainers out of reach of a rental home - let alone owning a home. The proposed housing investments address this specific need - through existing and new programs - with efficient per unit subsidies to build as many new affordable homes as possible; while providing a continuum of aging in place and emergency support.

We know funding can't be the only way to address our housing needs. That's why the Maine Affordable Housing Coalition is also advocating in this legislature for bills that deregulate and streamline building code, permitting, code enforcement, environmental review, and land use regulations. These will help catalyze the private market to address Maine's widespread housing shortage. We must cut the red tape and we urge you to join us in taking this comprehensive approach.

While cutting the red tape will reduce the cost of all housing in Maine, **funding is required so we don't leave behind people in Maine with the lowest-incomes. That's where these budget investments come into play.**

Having a full-time job doesn't guarantee housing affordability in Maine. Making \$50,000 a year doesn't mean you can afford to rent or buy a home in Maine anymore – teachers, child care workers, medical assistants, restaurant workers, EMTs can no longer afford housing. **Hard working Mainers can't access housing without this funding to lower costs.**

This **Supplemental Budget is particularly critical because it can be made available this year so programs that have been running at Maine Housing don't abruptly end.** Housing projects take years to plan and build. When a housing development program's funding ends, the planning stops and costs skyrocket. Speed and consistency are of the essence.

Building housing pays it forward for future generations as **long-term assets that benefit communities, spark lasting economic success, and help families for generations. Please support this funding for housing in Maine as well as other proven programs that help renters avoid eviction statewide.**