

Sam Lebel
Gray
LD 690

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs:

My name is Sam Lebel and I am a professional civil and environmental engineer. My work primarily focuses on providing engineering services for smart growth redevelopment projects that result in new housing and downtown revitalization.

I was lucky enough to purchase a home in 2017, but since then housing has become unattainable for most people, especially the workforce and younger demographic. Both personally and professionally, I am reminded on a daily basis of the effects of the housing crisis. I have countless friends, family members, acquaintances, and colleagues across a range of ages, backgrounds, and occupations that struggle with sustainable housing, something that is so clearly fundamental to achieving a decent quality of life, and something that used to actually be attainable for most people.

When people do not have secure housing, it sets them up for failure - mentally, socially, and financially. This then translates to strain on society as a whole. And those who do have a rental close to their workplace are often paying more than 30% of their salary, leading to frustrated citizens who can't build equity or feel comfortable starting a family. This encourages young people to leave Maine, who is already the oldest State by median resident age. Without young people to replenish the retiring workforce and embrace new industries and technologies, our State will undoubtedly face hardship.

We need to act now to continue deploying multiple tools and funding streams to enable the creation of affordable housing in a responsible and thoughtful way and address the 80,000 new homes needed by 2030. The need for this action is underscored by the extreme volatility in the federal government, including budget cuts for critical programs such as funding for affordable housing.

Please support LD 690 which not only presents a responsible way to create new affordable housing, but it creates jobs for thousands of people across several industries. I can't think of a better way to invest in our State. Thank you for your consideration and ongoing service to Maine.