

Testimony in Support of LD #1145 – Jaime-Lyn Allie

Resident of Country Lane Estate, Lewiston, Maine

Good afternoon, distinguished members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee. My name is Jaime-Lyn Allie, and I am a homeowner in Country Lane Estate Mobile Home Park in Lewiston. I purchased my home in November 2020. Like many Mainers, I saw a mobile home as an affordable path to homeownership — a chance at stability and community.

In May 2024, our park — along with another park across town — was sold to an out-of-state corporate investor called BoaVida. Between the two parks, over 360 households were impacted. These are not just numbers — these are families, elderly residents on fixed incomes, and single parents doing their best to make ends meet.

When I first heard whispers of a possible sale, I took the initiative and reached out to the Cooperative Development Institute on February 5th, before I even received formal notice. My goal was to explore a resident purchase and convert our park into a Resident-Owned Community. But what we ran up against was a complete lack of time, transparency, and cooperation from the seller.

Coordinating across two large parks — with no central means of communication — meant door-to-door outreach and scrambling to get organized. We ultimately submitted a fair offer, but we simply needed more time for due diligence: appraisals, infrastructure assessments, and all the necessary pieces to responsibly pursue financing. We weren't asking for favors — we were asking for a fair shot. The seller declined our offer, citing delays, and sold to BoaVida instead.

Since the sale, lot rent has already gone up \$40 per month. The new owner's posted rate for incoming residents is \$510/month — meaning many of us anticipate future increases of at least another \$90 more. For people on fixed incomes or single-income households like mine, that's devastating. It's not just a number on paper. It's food budgets, heating bills, and the ability to stay in our homes.

I spoke with neighbors — elderly residents and young families alike — who were terrified about what the future might hold. Mobile home parks were never meant to be high-return investments for corporate landlords. They were meant to be *communities* — and affordable ones at that.

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Here's the problem: Maine law currently says that residents must be given the *opportunity* to purchase their park — but without a right of first refusal, that opportunity is often an illusion. What good is the right to buy if it can be bypassed by simply refusing to wait or engage? LD #1145 addresses this critical gap. It creates a practical pathway for residents to pursue ownership without requiring a seller to accept less — only that they give residents a fair chance to match an offer.

If the state is going to codify resident purchase rights, then we need to give those rights meaning. Otherwise, we are setting up residents to fail — or worse, giving them false hope.

I urge you to support LD #1145. We are not asking for handouts. We are asking for the tools to protect our homes, our communities, and our futures.

Thank you for your time, and for your work on behalf of Maine residents.