

I have been a small-time landlord since 1992, through multiple market cycles, political shifts, and changes in landlord-tenant law. Most of my rental property is in Portland, and I have experienced the damage caused by Portland's rent control law. It exacerbates the shortage of housing, prevents improvements to existing housing, and increases property taxes on homeowners by devaluing rental property.

LD 1534 encourages the adoption of rent control statewide. It will cause smaller, more responsive landlords to sell their properties to investors who can better navigate the additional legal and bureaucratic hurdles and find ways to circumvent the law, and are more willing to forego maintenance.

Each rent control law is different and causes different problems. LD 1534 forces landlords to renew leases indefinitely, making it difficult to remove problem tenants who create unpleasant and often unsafe environments for other tenants. If a tenant is engaged in illegal activity, creating excessive noise, harassing or threatening other tenants, the landlord must prove this in court to get the offending tenant out. This usually requires testimony by the victimized tenants, who are afraid to testify. Often the only way to remove a problem tenant is by not renewing the lease. Non-renewal of leases is seldom a problem for responsible tenants. Landlords want them to stay.

Please support legislation which encourages construction of new housing by removing legal barriers and reducing costs. Rents are too high in Maine due to years of under-building. It appears that there are currently at least 3 bills, LD 1247, 1375 and 1385, and possibly others, which do that. Encouraging new construction will reduce rents, make it easy for tenants to find new housing, and incentivize landlords to attract and retain tenants. It will solve the housing crisis. Rent control cannot solve the shortage of housing, and only serves to partially contain the problem of high rents while decreasing the supply of housing and causing other unintended negative consequences.