

## Testimony in Support of LD 1522

An Act to Establish the Maine Eviction Prevention Program

Sponsor: Representative Rana

Public Hearing: Committee on **Housing and Economic Development** April 25, 2025 9:00 AM

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and members of the Committee on Housing and Economic Development,

My name is Ruben Torres, and I serve as the Advocacy, Communications, and Policy Manager for the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition (MIRC). MIRC represents more than 100 organizations across Maine, including grassroots immigrant-led groups, legal service providers, housing advocates, and direct service agencies, working collectively to improve the economic and social standing of Maine's immigrant communities, thereby uplifting the state as a whole. We are testifying in strong **support** of LD 1522, An Act to Establish the Maine Eviction Prevention Program.

In 2024, the Legislature recognized the importance of keeping Mainers housed and created the Eviction Prevention Program (EPP). The pilot program was a strategic investment in stability, and it worked. The EPP is projected to prevent over 1,600 evictions—a number that represents more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of all eviction filings last year for nonpayment of rent. That's not just a stat. It's hundreds of families, workers, seniors, and parents who were able to avoid the instability that often follows eviction.

We know from our members and partners that the EPP has filled a critical gap. It has helped families avoid eviction, become stabilized in their communities, and prevented many of the costs that follow displacement. By helping households bridge gaps in rent, the program has kept people housed.

Communities all over the state are seeing the consequences of limited housing stock, rising rents, and stagnating wages. Our immigrant communities are part of this broader challenge. People working in nearly every essential sector—healthcare, food systems, education, hospitality—find themselves navigating impossible choices when their rent outpaces their income. It often takes just one setback—a missed paycheck, a medical emergency, a paperwork delay—to trigger a housing crisis. Those vulnerabilities are not unique to immigrants. They're shared by Mainers across race, age, and geography. The EPP recognizes this by focusing not on identity, but on need.

And the need is growing. According to MaineHousing, 75% of households helped by the EPP earned less than \$31,000 a year. These are single parents, older adults on fixed incomes, Mainers living with disabilities, and people who work full-time jobs that simply do not pay enough to meet the cost of living. The EPP has helped ensure those Mainers do not fall through the cracks. This program also benefits more than just the people it serves directly. Every eviction prevented means lower costs to our cities and towns—less pressure on General Assistance programs, reduced strain on shelters, and lower public health and criminal justice costs. Local businesses and employers benefit too, because housing stability supports workforce stability.

The Eviction Prevention Program has shown us that we *can* respond to housing instability. We *can* prevent evictions rather than reacting to them. And that when we do, we strengthen our state.

We urge this committee to vote LD 1522 as “Ought to Pass”. Housing stability is essential not just for individual families, but for the health and resilience of our entire state. We need both long-term investments in affordable housing *and* immediate tools like the EPP to meet this moment.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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