

Testimony in Favor of LD 1723 - An Act to Amend the Laws Governing Manufactured Housing Communities to Prevent Excessive Rent and Fees Increases

Senator Curry, Representative Gere and Esteemed Members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee,

I am Jessica Linzer Simpson, of Cape Elizabeth and I care deeply about the affordable housing crisis in our State.

Representative Golek's bill seeks to help the 45,000 people in Maine who live in what is currently considered "affordable housing", their own home in a manufactured housing community. However, the people living in these communities are at great risk of losing that affordability, and really by events beyond their control.

If we, in Maine, care about those 45,000 people, we need to intercede; we need to act to preserve affordability. And time is ticking. The demographics are against us. A number of current owners of the parks want out, because they are reaching or have reached retirement age. Their community is seen as an excellent investment. One reason is because many residents cannot afford the thousands of dollars needed to move their home; so a potential owner sees this as a stable source of income, very different than buying an apartment building. As a result, they are being bought by a range of corporate entities, including large institutional investors, hedge funds and private equity firms. Last spring, the Bangor Daily News reported that one in five manufactured home communities in Maine is now owned by an out of state owner.

What this bill does is first and foremost preserve affordability by establishing security for these homeowners. It does this by stating that lot rent and fees cannot increase more than 10% over a period of four years. It's not denying increases, it is limiting **excessive** rent and fee increases!

To a resident of a community, this is doable, this is workable, and this is understandable. This you can plan for, you can remain in your home, you can age in place. This will surely help preserve affordability, without jeopardizing an overall community.

However, if there are legitimate circumstances that warrant an increase greater than this, the owner can ask for an exemption from the Manufactured Housing Board which grows from 9 to 13 members.

As a person who advocates for the 50+ community, who worked for decades helping the public at the Social Security Administration, and who serves on the Merit Retirement Savings Board representing the interests of retired people in Maine, I urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 1723.

Upon passage, join with me in the collective sigh of relief and celebration of preserving 45,000 affordable homes in Maine and knowing you took action that made a real difference in the lives of so many.

Thank you for all you do for the people and the State of Maine.

Sincerely,

Jessica