

Diane Whiteside
Wells
LD 1723

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

My name is Diane Whiteside, and I am a resident of Blueberry Ridge Mobile Home Park in Wells, Maine. I am testifying today in favor of LD 1723.

Blueberry Ridge is currently owned by Philips International of New York. Its CEO is Philip Pilevsky, a real estate developer who got his start by identifying undervalued properties. When I flush my toilet and the water is brown, I have to email their Regional office in Great Neck, New York, to report the problem. There is no local manager to call to remedy any such situation, and, as most of my neighbors have told me and I have personally experienced, the New York office rarely responds to residents' emails or phone calls. One neighbor has a pothole outside his home the size of an inner tube, and yet, our lot rents keep going up. My lot rent has gone up \$115 in two years, from \$435 per month to \$550 per month, with no explanation from the owners and only one month's notice! We expect another rent increase August 1, 2025. Perhaps you can begin to understand the extensive IMBALANCE between what residents pay and what we receive.

I would like to be heard by the corporate owners of my Park. I would like them to understand how a \$75 per month rent increase impacts those of us who are not rich. Paying \$900 more this year than I did last year is nothing to Philips International, but it's huge to me. It's also huge to my widowed neighbor, Ruth, who told me she has to borrow money each month to pay her lot rent! As I talked to my neighbors the past few months, I discovered that anyone who buys a mobile home now in Blueberry Ridge is charged an \$800 monthly lot rent, which is what the rest of us expect to be paying soon. At the rate lot rents are increasing, I'm afraid I won't be able to afford to stay in my home in the near future, a fear I share with three-fourths of my neighbors.

I am 77 years old, divorced, and live on less than \$1,000 a month Social Security benefits, even though I've worked since I was 16. I still work in order to pay my bills. Case in point: during a recent windstorm, some of the siding on my mobile home was torn off, and I have to pay the repairs, which will cost me thousands of dollars. And although the owners pay for our water, I use less but still pay the same lot rent as those with more than one income in their homes. The last increase of \$75 hit my wallet hard.

In conclusion, let me say I am strongly in favor of LD 1723, which will provide reasonable and affordable lot rent increases, and allow me and my neighbors to remain in our homes. LD 1723 will also increase the number of MHP residents on the State's Manufactured Housing Board, allowing our needs to be expressed and heard in the future. I am not against a company making a profit; I just don't want that profit to come at the expense of those who have less. LD 1723 would not place a burden on owners, but rather would simply BALANCE what residents pay for and can afford, with what the owners want and provide.

Thank you for your time.
Diane Whiteside