

Kaolin Pitcher, Deer Isle

I live on Deer Isle, where the Maine housing crisis is alive and well. Even with my family and community connections here, it took me 5 years to find affordable, year-round housing. Within those five years I lived in approximately 11 different locations, packing up and moving every 4-6 months. Because of the housing shortage, I spent all of my time in each of these locations putting the word out, desperately searching for my next living space. The only options I could find for all these years were always temporary.

As time went on, it became difficult to trust that these unstable home spaces could provide me any comfort — I couldn't settle because the upheaval of moving so frequently didn't allow me to ever create a home for myself. Even with my connections to the community, it always took me longer than 30 days to find my next living situation, and with the state-wide housing shortage it took me 5 years to find something more permanent.

As someone with the support of family and friends only miles away, I know there will always be couch or an extra room for me if I find myself completely without options. I can only imagine how traumatizing it must be to not have access to that kind of support while trying to navigate the housing shortage in this state, and I urge you to extend shelter stay to 90 days for these folks who are doing the best they can to provide themselves with an essential resource. Let shelters provide the community support that many of these folks might not yet have. As Mainers living in a rapidly changing state, we should only take measures to aid their efforts, not thwart them. Housing is essential, and home space is vital to creating community and family.

Do we need new and more sustainable options for all unhoused people in this state? Absolutely. But limiting shelter stay to 30 days in a state where the national housing crisis is also worsened by seasonal tourism and second home ownership will only harm the community and this state.

Thank you for your consideration.