



Maine People's Alliance

Senator Pierce, Rep. Gere, and members of the Joint Select Committee on Housing. My name is Cate Blackford and I am the Public Policy Director of the Maine People's Alliance. MPA is Maine's largest community action organization, with over 32,000 members across the state.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for LD 2, An Act to End Chronic Homelessness by Creating the Housing First Fund.

Housing First is a proven model for addressing the needs of the chronically homeless, providing housing to them as a right, along with supportive services, that not only greatly improve their lives but also significantly reduce their need to use the few systems available to people without homes: hospitals, prisons, and the like.

You will have heard today from numerous professional experts and people with lived experience who can attest to the success of the model, in Maine and beyond. By providing a reliable funding source for the supportive services, LD 2 would have an enormous impact on our ability as a state to scale up this incredibly effective model and I would urge you to support it.

We know that addressing this specific, urgent need will have a significant impact on the lives of hundreds of Mainers, and their communities. Yet it is but one piece of the puzzle. As your work continues, you will have dozens of bills before you. (Including nearly a dozen next week!) I would urge your support for legislative efforts that treat housing as a human right, reduce no cause and retaliatory evictions, strengthen tenants' rights, create a public development model that allows us to move beyond LIHTC and create permanently affordable housing, support alternative models of housing and homeownership such as co-ops and community land trusts, define shared responsibilities across towns and regions to meeting our housing needs, fully fund the development of affordable housing at the pace needed to make a dent in the crisis, create a residential rental registry, stabilize rents statewide, and ensure rent burdened low-and-moderate income Mainers have the rental assistance they need now.

I thank you all for the serious, thoughtful approach you are bringing to the complexity of the housing crisis and your reflections upon the deeply entrenched policies and beliefs that have led us to where we are today. This joint select committee has the opportunity to lay the foundation of a new housing system in Maine, where everyone has a safe, decent place to call home, that they can afford, in the community where they have ties. We look forward to supporting you in that work.

Thank you,

Cate Blackford