

# CrossWay LLC

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State of Maine- 131ST LEGISLATURE

Dear Judiciary Committee and other stakeholders:

I am writing as a person with a small investment in rental property. I feel compelled to write to you because of the onslaught of housing bills that are not going to help the housing crisis or stabilize access to and cost of rental units. I got into rental property by buying a 3 unit in Westbrook in 1997 at the age of 23. By selling my first cute little farmhouse to move into a tiny apartment and owner occupy a 3 unit, I was making sacrifices to implement my plan for retirement many years in the future. I was working as a licensed social worker and my husband was a restaurant manager. We would use our evenings, weekends and vacation times to improve our properties and attempt to be great landlords. We had some really bad situations and some really great ones, but through it all we felt called to do this work. I say all this to share with you that we are passionate about our tenants, our properties being kempt, and our communities. I'm seeing a deep sense of distrust and barriers to communication between tenants and landlords like I have never witnessed in over 25 years living in and owning rentals. We are seeing the good tenants and the "smaller" landlords as the scape goats in the housing crisis and it may feel like it accomplishes something in the short term, but it will be the end of local owners that are your neighbors, invested directly in the local community, and that often have full time jobs elsewhere.

**Below is a sample of bills that, if passed, will only make the housing crisis worse by:**

- destroying the lines of communication between property owners and renters.
  - Smaller, "part-time" landlords will sell out, putting more units in the hands of few.
  - The push for ADU's, duplex, tailored apts. to meet unique needs will all be for naught because there is no incentive and tons of liability to offer and manage them.
  - New supply will continue to be limited not just by the economy: taxes, utility costs, labor shortages and costs, building materials cost but also by laws that disincentivize new investment.
  - Older housing stock that has benefited from renovations made to attract and keep new renters to our state during the last couple years will stagnate.
  - Destroy the vast tenant choice (price, area, amenities, etc.) by cookie cutter legislation that hopes to control the few bad apples by rotting the barrel
  - Punishes good tenants by making them live with bad neighbors/co-tenants for longer periods of time and to cover the losses of unpaid, damaged units.
  - Removing the personalized screening process that benefits those with i.e. bad credit but good reason, by pushing more landlord into online, name/number style screening options.
  - More civil credit actions to recoup larger rent arrearages and clogging of courts.
  - Less property improvements because more money will go to keeping the lights on.
- ❖ LD 45 An Act to Prevent Retaliatory Evictions sets a precedent in the courts for having to prove that someone isn't wrong vs. that you are right.

- ❖ LD 330 An Act to Ensure Legal representation for Residents Facing Eviction. Are we going to fund community lawyers for civil hearings?
- ❖ LD 557 An Act to Decrease Discrimination Based on Evictions in Housing Applications. Persons with evictions (especially more than one) means they went through the ENTIRE process and had their day in court- shouldn't we be looking for solutions to how to minimize actual evictions, not just hide them?
- ❖ LD 558 An Act Regarding Rental Housing Applications. Is it still an application fee if the platform services (Zillow, apartments.com, cozi, etc.) charge it?
- ❖ LD 701 An Act to Increase the Notice Period for Rent Increase. Is the problem the notice or the increases? If so, what can we do to keep rents down and in line with income in this state.
- ❖ LD 804 An Act to Increase the Time Period for Notice to Terminate a Tenancy at Will. More landlords are going to **require the 3 months equivalent of rent for move in costs** in hopes of covering failure to pay once notice is given. The length of a tenancy contract should be an agreement that works between the landlord and tenant. This bill will, in essence, eliminate 30-day month-to-month rental agreements and **forces tenants to also give 90 days' notice**. Many landlords do not file civil cases to recoup 30 days of lost rent- if we must lose 90 days than **more civil credit actions will be filed**. And most importantly, **good tenants will be subjected to 90 full days of disruptive** but not necessarily actionable behaviors of a neighbor.

**We need to address the causes, not the symptoms of our housing+ problems.** Specifically, let's consider the cost of goods, lack of tradespeople and access to trades education, utilizing our schools' vocational programs to have more students leave with proficiencies in home repairs, budgeting and the like, local zoning, etc. Also,

- Increase local general assistance money and enforcement of its use.
- Community services like case management, employment services, "GAP" coverage for rent and utilities, criminal, recovery, physical and mental health support services.
- Implementation of the task force recommendations (which are readable here: [Task Force Summary Recommendations](#)) including: change of land use, real estate transfer tax use, publicly owned real estate converted to housing

**And lastly, LD 2 "An Act to Address Maine's Housing Crisis" by Speaker Rachel Talbot Ross.** This bill truly puts housing First by promoting positive and innovative ways to proactively address concerns around housing in Maine. I see this bill likened to a comprehensive plan that looks for solutions and presents us with a framework for handling challenges that inevitably will arise in the future- **Please support this bill.**

It is my hope you will be promoting positive ways to address this issue. Let's be people with "Can Do" solutions rather than "Don't Do" band aids. Thank you for your careful consideration.

Donna E. Hodges  
CrossWay LLC

DONNA CROSSWAY HODGES

Newport

LD 2

Please support LD 2 as a proactive step toward housing. This bill takes the initiatives needed to truly address citizens needs As they unfold rather than reactive when so much of someone's life or belongings has already been lost or disrupted. This bill utilizes agencies (DHHS, Maine Housing, Support Services) already in place and provides a source of funding to do more of what they are already doing in a streamlined way. Unlike the other bills this session that will create more instability in the rental housing market, LD 2 substantially addresses the recommendations of the Task Force.