

Ann Dodd-Collins
Portland
LD 1710

Senator Teresa Pierce, Representative Traci Gere, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Ann Dodd-Collins and I am a resident of Portland. I volunteer with Greater Portland Family Promise and Preble Street and I am testifying in support of LD 1710, “An Act to Establish the Maine Rental Assistance and Guarantee Program and Amend the Laws Regarding Tenants and the Municipal General Assistance Program”.

This act, also called the HOME (Housing Opportunities for Maine) Act, will provide consumer protections for low income Mainers paying unaffordable rent, prohibit housing discrimination based on a tenant’s source of income, and create a rental assistance program. We know that there is a state-wide housing crisis. We also know that rents are skyrocketing. AND we know that asylum seekers who have come to Maine depend on General Assistance to pay rent until they receive their work permits, but too many landlords refuse GA housing vouchers.

Low income Mainers need help to stay housed. “Affordable” housing units are not affordable to many low income renters. More than half the households with very low income are paying 50% or more of their income on rent. The rental assistance program outlined in this act would help Maine families pay their rent by covering a portion of the rent based on their income, which would provide stable housing for parents and their children. It would free up income for food, transportation, medical bills, and other necessities. This bill would also protect tenants paying a very high rent in the event their rent payment is late, something that can happen to families on General Assistance, and which makes it even harder for those tenants to find a safe rental in the future.

Cities and towns cannot solve the housing crisis. The state needs to provide housing assistance so that all Maine families, whether they have been here for 10 generations or 10 days, can have a safe and affordable place to live. Please vote Ought To Pass on LD 1710.