

Honorable Members of the Committee on Housing,

My name is Pat Schwebler, I live in Kennebunk, Maine, and I am testifying in favor of LD# 1931.

I work for the Cooperative Development Institute as a Co-Director for the New England Resident Owned Community program. I also serve as a Technical Advisor for some of our Maine ROCs

What is a ROC? A ROC is a term for a manufactured home community that the residents own and run as a democratically controlled, not-for-profit cooperative business.

The first mobile home park converted to a (ROC) happened about 40 years ago in New Hampshire. Since then, over 300 ROC communities have been founded across the U.S. Not one has ever been foreclosed on, nor has any borrower sold back to a commercial operator.

There are currently ten ROCs in Maine. Within these communities are about 500 households and over 1000 residents. The monthly lot rent ranges from the lowest at \$260 a month to the highest at \$465. The average rent over the ten communities is \$341 a month. Almost all our members fall below the Average Median Income of 80%, and about 40% of the membership falls under 50% of the AMI.

Over the Maine ROC portfolio, approximately ten million dollars in loans have been granted by the following lending institutions:

Genesis, The Maine State Housing Authority, Community Concepts, The Cooperative Fund of New England, Bangor Savings Bank, Camden National Bank.

The members that reside in the ROCs cross the spectrum of Mainers; Retired veterans, older adults aging in place, young families with children, and local workers that keep Maine humming by driving our school buses, plowing our roads, and working in the local resorts and retail shops.

To many in this room, a rent of \$341 seems like an easy target to hit; however, for a person who works a minimum wage job or lives on a meager social security check that reflects a lifetime of minimum wage, even this rent is difficult.

In pulling together data for you today, I noticed a theme throughout the stories of how many Maine ROCs came to be. At least 7 out of the 10 ROCs in Maine occurred because the community owner offered the tenants the right to purchase it before putting it on the open real estate market. Can you imagine today if the ROCs in Camden, Rockland, and Brunswick, which all happen to be about a mile away from the ocean, became available without an offer to purchase protection law? Out-of-state equity investors would be all over it and displace hundreds of Mainers. I ask you to support LD #1931 to help preserve the most inexpensive unsubsidized form of affordable housing available today in Maine.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pat Schwebler

Co-Director, New England Resident Owned Communities

Cooperative Development Institute

