

To: Maine Legislature Joint Standing Committee on Housing
January 23, 2024

Testimony in Favor of LD 337, An Act to Amend the Regulation of Manufactured Housing to Increase Affordable Housing

My name is Patricia Ann Wright and I am a volunteer with AARP Maine; I live in Old Orchard Beach.

I encourage the committee to vote in favor of LD337 because it is one common sense way to immediately help address Maine's desperate need for a wide variety of affordable housing. LD 337 would simply allow manufactured housing to be used anywhere single family housing is allowed, and it would still be subject to the same zoning requirements, as well as all necessary construction standards.

Manufactured housing would help fill a void in the lower, truly "affordable" housing stock since manufactured homes are about half the cost of typical homes to construct, as their production environment can be controlled. And they can be more versatile in customizing their accessibility for those with special needs or challenges, such as older adults who could benefit from things like wider halls, lower countertops or handrails.

The average age of manufactured housing residents is 54, with over 60% being over the age of 50 according to the Manufactured Housing Institute. Since this is the demographic that AARP advocates for, it seems logical that AARP Maine stands behind LD 337 as a means to potentially benefit many of our members, particularly those on fixed incomes or economically challenged and in need of housing.

Using myself as an example: a recent widow on a fixed income now living in a large, two story condo, should I want to move somewhere smaller, there is a dearth of affordable options. Which reminded me of one of our "beginner" homes which happened to be a single floor modular home on a residential lot in a quiet Portland family neighborhood. It was well built, sturdy, easy to heat and easy to maintain; I'd appreciate that single floor living now. If you drove by that home, you would not know that it is a manufactured home as it blends right into the neighborhood. In my experience, most people do not appreciate the variety and quality of the modern manufactured home nor the benefits it can provide, including construction costs, economy of scale and maintenance.

I encourage you both as a Maine AARP volunteer and as an individual citizen passionate about addressing our housing crisis to vote "ought to pass" on LD 337. Thank you.