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## Maine Community Action Partnership Supports LD 2158 An Act to Improve the Housing Voucher System"

January 30, 2024

Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, members of the Committee on Housing, I am Megan Hannan, Executive Director of the Maine Community Action Partnership, the membership organization of the ten community action agencies in Maine, and we support LD 2158 An Act to Improve the Housing Voucher System.

Our state's greatest resource is our people, and our state's policies shape people's possibilities. In Community Action, we create conditions that invite children to learn and adults to apply their skills, tapping into the deep-rooted potential in our communities. Through our Whole Family approach, we build a family's capacity for sustained stability and economic growth. We invest in the family's well-being, we let them drive their own story, and we have tangible success.

Despite that, Maine rents are too high for most Mainers, low- and middle-income. Households with very low incomes are facing eviction at a much higher rate than others, and those with children are in even higher risk situations. As I have discussed here earlier, poverty, unstable housing and lack of support are a recipe for adverse childhood events (ACEs) that follow children for the rest of their lives.

LD 2158 can help to avert that by providing vouchers for rental assistance, allowing families to continue to work and study and be able to buy food, clothing and other necessities. More than half of low-income households are paying more than half of their income in rent. That leaves precious little for the rest of their needs. We do have some support for families in place, but too few to meet all of the needs, and too few families take advantage of them.

Landlords will also benefit by having stable families in their units. Unfortunately, some landlords choose not to rent to those with housing vouchers or assistance – interestingly the opposite of what we saw with the Federally funded rental assistance program during the pandemic. A new, tightly focused program would keep people in their homes, not be seen as a massive giveaway that leads to even higher rents.

Thank you for your time and attention, I am happy to answer your questions if I can.

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