

April 11, 2021

RE: Testimony in Support of LD 1246 – Resolve, To Study Best Practices and Different Area Needs for Development of Affordable Homes and Expanding Home Ownership in Maine Communities.

Dear Chairs Hickman and Sylvester, and members of the Labor and Housing Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in support of LD 1246 - Resolve, To Study Best Practices and Different Area Needs for Development of Affordable Homes and Expanding Home Ownership in Maine Communities.

I am urging you to support this bill to explore the possibilities and opportunities for future development of Affordable Housing and Home Ownership in Maine.

I'd like to share my recent story with you to highlight the need and tangible result of such programs. I know first hand what it is like to struggle with the housing issue in Maine. My wife and I own a small artisan knitwear business and gallery in Kennebunkport. We had been renting a small house for 6 years, where we lived and worked out of our home studio. During the pandemic, we were busy struggling to keep our business afloat, when our landlords informed us that they were raising our (already out-of-our range) rent. We had been saving, and were hoping to purchase a home to spend the next part of our lives in.

As you all know- the pandemic brought more and more folks from out of state into Maine buying properties and driving the housing market up, up , and up. Needless to say, we were not going to be able purchase a home in the town that we live, work, and own a business in.

The percentage of property owners in our town living here year round is only 56%, with 80% of Kennebunkport's workforce commuting from other towns. The rental situation in all of York County is just as bleak. There are simply not enough year round (non-vacation) rentals to meet the needs of it's people. Recently, thanks to the newly established Kennebunkport Heritage Housing Trust, and the dedication of numerous individuals, an alternative solution is in the process of being developed in our town.

The KHHT has the goal of building 25 affordable homes in Kennebunkport by 2025. After succumbing to the fact that we were going to have to leave our community to find an affordable place to live, we were informed that we had been chosen to purchase one of the first 6 homes that the KHHT is building this year. The relief, gratitude and opportunity that this affords us is exceptional.

Prior to the affordable housing opportunity presented by the KHHT, our options were limited and bleak. As small business owners, artisans, and low income Mainers, especially during the Covid-19 disaster, we have been anxious and insecure about our living situation.

We are hard-working, engaged community members, but our community, our state, lacks the affordable housing to keep people like us here.

I highly encourage you to support this resolution to assist the people and enhance the communities of Maine.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this testimony.

Respectfully,  
Jennifer Armstrong  
Kennebunkport, ME