



19 Community Drive • Augusta, Maine 04330 • (207) 622-7501 • Fax: (207) 623-3590

Testimony in Support of LD 1322 (“Resolve, Directing the Maine State Housing Authority To Allow Rental Housing Owners To Apply for Emergency Rental Relief Assistance”)

J. Andrew Cashman on behalf of the Maine Association of REALTORS®

April 26, 2021

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing, my name is Andy Cashman. I am a Partner at Preti Flaherty and I am here on behalf of my client, the Maine Association of REALTORS®, which is a professional trade association with over 5600 members state wide. Our members represent both buyers and sellers and are involved in both residential and commercial transactions. Our membership also includes affiliates, which are those professionals involved in real estate transactions, such as bankers, closing agents, title agents, appraisers, building inspectors, surveyors, etc. The Maine Association is a member of the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR) which is the largest trade association in the nation.

The Maine Association of REALTORS® supports LD 1322. If passed, this legislation would direct Maine State Housing to allow rental housing owners to apply for COVID-19 emergency rental relief assistance for lost rental revenue from tenants not current on their rent and unable or unwilling to apply for tenant rental assistance.

We support this bill for several reasons.

- Tenants may not know about or be willing to apply for rental assistance under the program – and cannot currently be evicted due to the CDC eviction moratorium.
- Landlords, as small business owners, also have financial obligations such as mortgages, property taxes, and utilities. Their credit is being negatively impacted by tenants’ non-payment of rent if they, in turn, cannot meet their financial obligations.
- Many landlords are small family enterprises with their life savings tied up in their housing operations. They should not bear the cost of the ongoing public health emergency, housing tenants who are not paying. Moreover, if the non-paying tenant moves out suddenly, it is highly likely that this small landlord will lose that past overdue rent.



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- Non-paying tenants often impact the quality of life for the other tenants because the landlord may not be able to afford maintenance, repairs, or upgrades due to the reduction in rental income.

Maine needs long-term rental housing availability. Most landlords are small businesses in Maine, and we need those businesses to remain viable to keep the housing stock as long-term rentals. If tenants are unwilling or unable to apply for rental assistance on their own and are not paying their rent, property owners should be allowed access to these COVID rental relief funds to continue to provide much-needed housing for their tenants.

For these reasons, we urge you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1322. Thank you for your time and consideration.