



Traci Gere

7 Towne Street
Kennebunkport, ME 04046
Phone: (207) 967-6175
Traci.Gere@legislature.maine.gov

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002
(207) 287-1400
TTY: MAINE RELAY 711

**Testimony of Representative Traci Gere on LD 1397,
“An Act Directing the Maine State Housing Authority
To Create a Commission To Develop a
Comprehensive Rental Registry for Multifamily Housing ”
April 26, 2021**

Good morning Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester, and distinguished colleagues of the Committee on Labor and Housing. I am Representative Traci Gere, and I represent House District 9. I live in Kennebunkport. I am here to introduce LD 1397.

As the state legislature, we have the opportunity to create self-sustaining, systemic change that helps Maine people to have better lives. In some cases, this can be accomplished by giving people access to information that is otherwise hard to obtain. We've seen this happen in many sectors. For example, today when you go to buy a car, you can find details on available cars on CarGurus or Vroom, and look up a particular vehicle's service and accident history on CarFax, whereas in the past this information was very difficult to find.

We see a similar kind of information gap in the rental housing market. People struggle to find information on available rental housing. They are desperately looking for rentals and turning to social media with posts like "Does anybody know of any places for rent? I can't find ANYTHING. I don't know what I'm going to do." At times, word-of-mouth seems the only way to get information. I hear from constituents regularly about their struggles with finding information on rentals. The rental market is opaque, and that makes it difficult for renters to navigate.

The goal of LD 1397 is to create a more transparent rental market across the state, where all rental properties are listed in a comprehensive database, and there is information about the property, the rental history, and code violations and remediation, including lead abatement data, etc. The database would also include clear information on who the owners, managers, and emergency contact for each unit are, which I understand can be hard to get clarity on with absentee owners, complicated ownership structures, and varying quality and dedication on the part of management companies.

This type of database would be a resource for renters, and also a tool for cities and municipalities to maintain up-to-date information on and oversight of properties and landlords. Municipalities do not typically have dedicated resources to develop this type of tool, but could benefit from having it available. With such a tool, municipalities could provide better service to their residents, making available the information needed to create a fairer, safer, and more open rental market.

[District 9: Biddeford \(part\), Kennebunk \(part\) and Kennebunkport](#)



Traci Gere

7 Towne Street
Kennebunkport, ME 04046
Phone: (207) 967-6175
Traci.Gere@legislature.maine.gov

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002
(207) 287-1400
TTY: MAINE RELAY 711

Unlike in other markets (e.g., car buying, home sales), there is no logical player in the rental housing market with an interest in creating such an information tool. The purpose of LD 1397 is to designate a commission to document the characteristics of a rental registry database, prototype it, and test it in interested municipalities. Ideally, the database would provide:

- User friendly interfaces for renters looking for property information, for property owners to keep the information on their own units up-to-date, and for municipalities managing oversight and compliance
- Automated updates from code enforcement and other feeds (e.g., lead abatement) in other databases
- Integrated capabilities (email, texting, emergency alerts) to facilitate communications between municipalities and property managers

The project envisioned in LD 1397 will start the conversation about how we empower tenants by putting more information in their hands, and how we assist municipalities with a tool they can leverage to improve the rental market for their residents. I ask for your support for this initiative.

I am available to answer any questions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Traci Gere".

Traci Gere
State Representative