



Maine People's Alliance

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Cate Blackford. I am the Public Policy Director for the Maine People's Alliance. MPA is Maine's largest community action organization, with over 32,000 members across the state. Our mission is to create a world where everyone has what they need, contributes what they can, and no one is left behind.

I am here today to speak on behalf of LD 1656. This bill offers a bold solution to address three intertwined crises facing our state: a severe lack of affordable housing, a lack of jobs and skilled workers in our green building sector and the contributions our buildings are making to climate change.

Precisely because it addresses these three issues together, LD 1656 will be far more effective. By using an investment in desperately needed affordable housing as a catalyst to invest in our green construction capacity and develop our skilled workforce, it will have significant economic multiplier effects: Each dollar invested in affordable housing boosts local economies by leveraging public and private resources to generate income—including resident earnings and additional local tax revenue—and supports job creation and retention.¹ This is a bold bill, scaled to address the magnitude of the three crises, for the sake of us all.

I am sure that today (and on many other days) you will hear numerous stories about the layers of harm and struggle that come from a lack of affordable housing on the health, well-being and stability of a family. You will also hear stories of people forced to leave Maine or struggle to make ends meet in our construction trades and the changes that living wages and benefits can have on not just families but communities.

In addition to addressing these vital human needs, investing in energy-efficient affordable housing built with living wages helps us all. It means more people who aren't struggling to make ends meet every month -- and who have more to spend in the local economy.² Higher labor, safety and wage standards mean workers do better, and that Maine becomes more attractive to workers who might otherwise choose not to live in Maine, or be forced to work out of state due to depressed wages. This all leads to

¹ <https://nlihc.org/explore-issues/why-we-care>

² <https://commonbond.org/economic-benefits-of-affordable-housing/>

growing, healthier economies, and healthier communities.

And, in addition to the obvious benefits of easing the impact of climate change, green construction requirements will open up more opportunities for innovative sustainable construction businesses to thrive in Maine. That, in turn, means more people making a good living and spending their money in Maine.

How can we say no to making this critical investment in our future?

Maine People's Alliance supports LD 1656 and urges you to vote Ought to Pass.

I am happy to take any questions.

Thank you for your time.

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