

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing: I'm Shaun Donnelly, a resident of Arundel, and my testimony today is in favor of LD 1656.

Our great state is facing two equally existential crises in filling our desperate need for affordable housing while eliminating our contribution to global climate change. This bill is a smart and innovative approach to both for a number of reasons.

As a digital illustrator, I have worked closely with architects and engineers for more than two decades visualizing their designs in 3D and communicating their ideas to the public. Our state is blessed with many talented designers who want to design the smart homes of the future, but are limited by what developers only concerned with the greatest return on their own investment are willing to spend. Opportunities like this will be a huge boon for their industry, and unlocking their creative potential could make Maine a leader in innovative green home design.

Requiring these new homes to meet green building certifications is not only smart on climate, but will make them more affordable as well. Whether it's through weather tightening, energy efficient heating and cooling systems, or grid offsets via active or passive solar systems, these technologies make buildings cheaper to operate on day one and over the course of their useful life.

State subsidy of new construction on this scale will also add thousands of good paying construction jobs and draw more people to the workforce. They will also receive on the job training on new technologies and green construction techniques, skills that will be increasing in demand from home owners across the state who want to modernize their homes.

With the changing climate poised to make other parts of the United States, particularly the south and the west, unbearably hot and arid over the coming decades, it is only a matter of time until Maine sees an influx of climate refugees. The pandemic jump started this effect, but I believe this is just a preview of trends that are coming. This makes it all the more urgent that we start increasing and modernizing our housing stock now and make sure that every Mainer already here has a place to live.

Climate change and affordable housing are massive problems facing our state. No one bill or policy change is going to solve either one, but LD 1656 is a big step in the right direction, and one that will pay dividends for the people of Maine for decades to come. I urge that you vote "ought to pass" on this crucial piece of legislation.

Shaun Donnelly
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