

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester, and honorable members of the Labor and Housing Committee: my name is Patty Kidder and I am a resident of Springvale, part of the city of Sanford. I am here today to testify in favor of LD 1656: An Act To Build Energy Efficient Affordable Housing.

I am here today to tell you housing insecurity is a real problem in Maine. Last year when the Pandemic first started, Maine Peoples' Alliance started MainersTogether.com which paired volunteers with people in need. I was the volunteer coordinator for the greater Sanford area. Some of the people I helped were on the brink of eviction. Once you have an eviction on your record, it is very hard to get another apartment. These people were low-income and would qualify for a section 8 voucher except their apartments won't pass inspection and the landlords won't follow the rules to accept the vouchers. These people need energy efficient affordable housing.

I started trying to help a homeless couple get an affordable apartment. They had been staying in a friend's spare bedroom until the pandemic started when the friend made them leave. They had no place to go but into the woods around town and set up camp. I brought them food and gave them my extra camping supplies. I discovered they were not alone. There were several tent cities in the different wooded areas. At one point they found an apartment and we found help for the security deposit through my church and then it fell apart. The apartment never passed the inspection and they were homeless again.

When the people I was trying to help would get a section 8 voucher you had limited time to find an apartment that would pass the inspection and a landlord who would accept the people as tenants. There were application forms to fill out and fees to scrape together and by then someone else with ready cash and great references had already signed the lease. There just isn't enough

affordable housing for low income people in my community. Some people I have been helping, pay rent that is more than 60% of their income. They can't keep up with their other living expenses.

A friend just lost her husband to complications after open heart surgery and now may lose her home because of the loss of income. I, too, worry that if my husband dies before me, I will no longer be able to afford my mortgage which is lower than rents in my area. Will I become homeless, too?

All people need an affordable, safe place to live before they can work on putting their lives back together. Housing first, it works. Please vote LD 1656 ought to pass. Our low-income neighbors need more affordable energy efficient places to live and our state needs the good paying jobs this bill will provide.

Honorable members of the Labor and Housing Committee, thank you for your time.

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