

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing: my name is Cooper Krause, I am a resident of Portland, and I am here today to testify in favor of LD 1656.

This bill will address three critical, interconnected problems that hurt us all in Maine: the housing shortage, a labor crisis that means the state has both too few jobs, and not enough people to fill them, and the climate crisis. It uses an investment in affordable housing as the catalyst for scaling up our capacity to address all three crises together.

I was a resident at Bayside Village. When the building got sold, 400 residents got displaced, suddenly facing housing insecurity. A majority of residents were New Mainers on general assistance. The state should invest in affordable housing.

I recently spoke with a woman who's paying \$1200 to rent a room without windows. Rent is predatory. Low-income renters aren't given the choice with rentals given their budget. They're not getting the cheapest or the best housing, and have to pay more for worse living conditions. The housing rental market preys on renters. Investment in affordable housing with windows would improve the community's health.

For a year and a half, I lived with an electrician who owned his own contracting company in Congo. In the US he doesn't have proper licenses so had to work long hours in factories. New Mainers are skilled at all sorts of trades, but don't have the ability to start working for a company with their education. Investment in green construction could have positive effects on New Mainers and diversify the workforce by getting more people into apprenticeship programs.

To address these issues, Maine needs to significantly scale up our ability to build energy efficient housing by expanding our skilled green building workforce through targeted investments that are dedicated to green infrastructure. LD 1656 does just that.

Thank you,
Cooper Krause