

Gina Morin  
Auburn

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

We have three interconnected problems that hurt everyone in Maine. A housing shortage, labor crises and the climate change crisis. We also have a unique opportunity to take advantage of federal funds for affordable housing. This housing bill will address all three in one bill.

I have grandchildren who don't deserve to inherit a climate crisis when we can start fighting it today. If we wait for future generations, it'll be too late. We also need a skilled workforce, with good paying jobs and benefits to incentivise younger generations to stay here in Maine. This will also grow Maine's economy.

In 2016, I was forced out of my home and I lived in my car for ten days. I struggled to eat and stay warm. I had to go to my storage unit just to heat water for ramen noodles. I used a quarter of a tank of gas just to try to keep warm at night. After that, I rented a motel room where I lived for the next four and a half years. Living in a motel room isn't a picnic and it's much easier than living in a car. I was one of the lucky ones who had a car to live in because most homeless people don't.

When the pandemic started, I was connected with a mutual aid group called MainersTogether. It was nothing but dumb luck that a fellow volunteer had an apartment for rent and I told her I was interested in renting it. I felt I was the one who benefitted the most because I had lost all hope of finding a real home. Two months later I moved into the apartment. My apartment has changed my life. I'm actually living again, not just surviving, and I'm so grateful. People like me should not be living in motels. We need safe affordable housing. Please join me in supporting LD 1656 so folks like me can start living again. Thank you.