



5/10/2021

## Support for LD 1656, An Act To Promote Energy-Efficient Affordable Housing

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing,

My name is Craig Saddlemire and I work for the Raise-Op Housing Cooperative in Lewiston, a resident-owned affordable housing organization. We develop and operate our own properties together as residents.

LD 1656 offers a bold solution to help create an estimated 1,000 units of needed housing over the next 2 years. It provides flexible programming requirements so that it can be used statewide in different communities, in combination with different types of mixed-income housing developments. It also provides targeted priorities to make sure we are maximizing benefit for low-income residents in need.

While rental assistance programs address affordability for low-income tenants, LD 1656 is going to address the quantity and quality of our affordable housing supply. At this moment, the available housing supply for low-income people is shrinking or altogether non-existent. Recall the tragic story of Russell Williams, a person living without shelter in Brunswick, who froze to death on a cold night in November of 2019 with a rental assistance voucher in his hand, because he could not find an available unit to rent.

For our housing supply that does exist, much of it is old and simply does not meet the needs of vulnerable renters, especially those living with a physical disability, with large families, or with mental illness.

Put simply, we need better housing. Housing that promotes health, and does not poison developing children with lead or mold. Housing that is welcoming to vulnerable people, and does not discriminate against applicants because they are poor, BIPOC, living with a disability, or formerly homeless. We need housing that reduces our carbon footprint and lasts 100 years, not housing that wastes energy and requires replacement in 20 years. We need housing ownership and management that is committed to operating the property for the maximum benefit to residents, connecting them to services and resources, promoting their empowerment, self-sufficiency, and social mobility. Not ownership that discards tenants as soon as they become inconvenient or less lucrative than the next option. And we need to build this on a committed scale that creates good, long term jobs so that our residential construction industry can grow to the size that we need to sustainably house our people today and in the future.

I've spoken to builders, architects, and engineers who are equally unhappy with this situation, and would like to build good homes for the regular folks who need it most. But so long as the only paying customers are people building luxury 2nd and 3rd homes, that is what the industry



will serve. LD 1656 makes a real investment to create the incentive for the industry to change and serve this urgent need of affordable housing.

Our affordable housing shortage is severe, and will only worsen if we don't address it on a large scale. Please support LD 1656. It is the bold solution we need to guarantee a good home for every Mainer.

Sincerely,

Craig Saddle mire

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