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Maine Community Action Partnership Supports LD 2003 An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Commission To Increase Housing Opportunities in Maine by Studying Zoning and Land Use Restrictions

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Senator Daughtry, Representative Sylvester, Members of the Committee On Labor and Housing, I am Megan Hannan, Executive Director of Maine Community Action Partnership and we support LD 2003 An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Commission To Increase Housing Opportunities in Maine by Studying Zoning and Land Use Restrictions.

Maine Community Action Agencies are the local program operators and administrators of several housing programs, from building affordable housing to retrofitting, weatherizing and heating homes for people with moderate- to low-income to education and workforce development. We use the Whole Family, or Two-Generation approach to our customers, meaning we try to fill as many gaps in a household as we can. From infants to older Mainers, families of all types, we meet people where they are to help fulfil their goals and help the get where they want their lives to be.

During our recent [Community Assessment](#), we interviewed over 7,000 Mainers, and the number one difficulty they identified across the state is the same: access to safe, appropriate, affordable housing. Therefore, we were not surprised at the Commission's findings, and welcome their recommendations.

We recognize the historical role of racism and classism in our zoning laws and neighborhood's reactions to new zoning and/or housing proposals, and it saddens me each and every time. I hear the coded language that claims "I want affordable housing in [town], of course, but just not here," or "but that doesn't fit" or "somewhere else would be better suited for those people." I am not always sure if the people who make such claims have any idea who "those people" might be, but it doesn't seem to matter. Whether it is people who are homeless staying in hotels or people who are low- to moderate-income looking for permanent housing, the pervasive myth of who "those people" are stymies housing development, no matter how appropriate the siting, adequate the financing or able to pay the rent the residents will be.

In the Community Action family, "those people" are our people. They are working multiple jobs; going to school; raising families; caring for their elders; trying to safely live their lives. There are many technical details in LD 2003, and we support them all. Most of all, we support the individuals and families who need this affordable housing, and we know that at the bottom of pile of reasons we do not have enough of it is a tragic narrative about the people who will move in. While we work to update that narrative for the 21st century, let's update our zoning and other land use policies to meet our 21st century housing needs.

Thank you for your time and attention; I am happy to answer any questions that I can.

Megan Hannan
Executive Director