



Preble Street

Turning Hunger and Homelessness into Opportunity and Hope

Florence House
Huston Commons
Logan Place
Anti-Trafficking Services
Healing Center
Veterans Housing Services
Rapid Re-Housing
Emergency Food Programs
Teen Center
Joe Kreisler Teen Shelter
First Place
Street Outreach Collaborativ
Advocacy
Maine Hunger Initiative
Health Services
MMC-Preble Street
Learning Collaborative
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March 7, 2022

Good morning, Senator Daughtry, Representative Sylvester, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing,

My name is Terence Miller, and I am the Advocacy Director at Preble Street, a nonprofit human service agency with over fifteen programs serving the most vulnerable people across the state of Maine. The mission of Preble Street is to provide accessible barrier-free services to empower people experiencing homelessness, housing, hunger, and poverty and to advocate for solutions to these problems. I am submitting this testimony in support of 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 is facing a dire housing crisis. [Homes are less available and less affordable.](#) According to [a recent National Low Income Housing Coalition study](#), Maine has the ninth-largest gap between the income of an average renter and the revenue required to afford a two-bedroom rental. The state constructed just 454 affordable housing units in 2021, which is less than 2% of the [current estimated need of 25,000 units](#). The lack of affordable housing disproportionately affects Maine's BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) population; [26% of Maine's homeless population are Black or African American despite making up only 1% of Maine's population.](#)

We must use bills like LD 2003 to enhance our capacity to meet the demands of this growing crisis immediately. We are encouraged by [the recommendations of the Commission to Increase Housing Opportunities in Maine](#), and this bill would implement said recommendations that represent diverse housing stakeholders that studied Maine's zoning laws. Community members across the state have been harmed by exclusionary zoning and growth caps. LD 2003's recommendation to prohibit these practices is a step in the right direction toward prioritizing safe, affordable, and accessible housing for people across the state. Furthermore, we encourage you to take advantage of increased federal funding and [broad bipartisan support](#) to offer incentives and technical assistance to municipalities statewide to build more affordable housing.

Economic instability, racial inequity, and quickly changing demographics mean that new approaches to housing are needed for economic growth and to [address homelessness](#). Affordable housing is an urban issue affecting the Portland area and a growing rural problem. According to the [Genesis Community Loan Fund](#), there are 6,200 [Section 515 rental assistance](#) units in rural Maine, with 2,500 potentially leaving the program by 2030. Over 2,000 of the threatened units are in the 2nd Congressional District. Sixty percent of the assistance budget is set aside for the elderly or disabled. Losing these units would exacerbate the state's housing shortage for the [nation's oldest population.](#)

For these reasons, Preble Street urges you to vote in support of LD 2003. Thank you for your time.

