

TESTIMONY IN support of LD 1365, An Act to Prohibit Municipalities from Prohibiting Short-term Rentals.

Senator Chipman, Representative Terry and Members of the Taxation Committee. My name is Debra Hart and I am a resident of Manchester, Maine. I own Hart Public Policy and I am speaking to you today on behalf of my client, the Vacation Rental Professionals of Maine in support of 1365. An Act to Prohibit Municipalities from Prohibiting Short-term Rentals.

The Vacation Rental Professionals of Maine is an association that represents thousands of rental properties located here in the State of Maine. They provide assistance to their property owners in renting their properties and ensuring those properties are held to the highest standards of safety while also being good neighbors in the areas they are located. During the pandemic, they worked hard to make sure that when it was safe for vacationers to return to Maine they could do so in a safe way with full knowledge of the new rules renters needed to follow. On-line rental platforms seldom provide this level of service, such as Evolve, Airbnb or VRBO, and VRPOME takes pride in making sure that their guests have a positive experience and come back to Maine year after year to spend their vacation time here in our great State. The property owners that my clients represent pay the lodging tax, they pay property taxes, and in addition they employ a number of Maine residents who clean the properties and provide a number of other services including landscaping, window cleaning, mowing, garbage removal, carpenters, plumbers, contractors, etc.

The bill before you would simply ensure that these property owners have the ability to continue to be able to rent short-term rentals without having different municipalities have different criteria on rental options. Many Maine people have inherited a cottage or a camp, or in fact have invested in a second home that they do not use as their primary residence but intend to retire to Maine ~ often times within 5-15 years of purchasing. They often use these properties as an added source of income to help with their retirement, pay for their children's college education or a number of other purposes.

While we appreciate that different municipalities have issues with rental properties, the Vacation Rental Professions of Maine believe that being able to responsibly rent properties is a win-win for the property owner and also for the community that benefits from these properties being rented with all the ancillary services they provide and benefits to the local economies. For these reasons, we support this bill, which in fact supports this time-honored tradition of being able to rent a property in Maine.

I'd be happy to answer any questions or provide you with any additional information.

