



**Testimony of Jena Jones on Behalf of
the Maine Council on Aging to the Committee on
Taxation**

**In Favor of LD 2106 - An Act to Accelerate the
Production of Affordable Housing and Strengthen
the Historic Property Rehabilitation Tax Credit**

Submitted January 24, 2024

Greetings, Senator Grohoski, Representative Perry, and the members of the Committee on Taxation.

My name is Jena Jones, and I am the Director of Policy and Advocacy at the Maine Council on Aging (MCOA). The MCOA is a broad, multidisciplinary network of over 140 organizations, businesses, municipalities, and older community members working to ensure we can all live healthy, engaged, and secure lives with choices and opportunities as we age at home and in community settings. I am testifying in favor of LD 2106.

One of the most complex and critical challenges facing older Mainers is the lack of affordable housing. While we have made significant investments in developing new units of affordable housing and expanded access to opportunities to develop accessory dwelling units and participate in home sharing, the reality remains that we simply do not have enough affordable housing units to meet the current demand for housing. This is resulting in thousands of older Mainers grappling with the real possibility that they will become unhoused for the first time in their lives.

When we examine the crisis more closely, we see that some populations are at a greater disadvantage than others. The ramifications of this reality have yielded some deeply concerning trends for older people. In 2020, older adults were the fastest-growing homeless population in the nation.¹ As of 2022, the number of homeless people over the age of 62 has doubled and the number of older adults who are unhoused is expected to triple by 2030.²

Not all older adults are equally at risk. Older women, BIPOC, and LGBTQ+ people who experienced economic disparities and injustices throughout their lifetimes have significantly fewer resources and lower incomes than people who did not experience economic injustices. Older Maine women are at a particular disadvantage when compared to older men. Following a lifetime of fewer economic opportunities than their male counterparts, older women are twice as likely to live alone *and* to have incomes below 100% of the FPL.³

This means that factors like inflation and the rising costs of food, interest rates, and utilities are pushing many older Maine people to the point of having to decide whether to pay the electric

¹ (Kushel, 2020)

² (Skiba, 2022)

³ (Snow, 2022)

bill, the heating bill, or mortgage or rent, and the repercussions of making those decisions is leaving older adults out in the cold, literally. Though Maine is grappling with a housing shortage similar to what is being experienced throughout the country, our state's demographics ensure that older people, who have no ability to change their economic status, will be among those who are squeezed the hardest.

Thus, we need to be intentional and creative in how we craft solutions to our housing shortage. LD 2106 is one of those solutions. According to last year's *State of Maine Housing Production Needs Study*, Maine will need to add just under 40,000 homes to account for the current need and will then need to add an estimated 37,900 to 45,800 more homes to meet demand by 2030.⁴ Anything we can do to finance the production of these new units must be done.

Complex challenges like our current housing situation require bold action. I urge you to act in support of LD 2106.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jena Jones

⁴ (State of Maine Housing Production Needs Study, 2023)