

Prawer, Samuel

From: Prawer, Samuel
Sent: Tuesday, September 28, 2021 9:11 AM
To: Anthony Jackson; Arata, Amy; Cheryl Golek; Dan Brennan; Dana Totman; Erin Cooperrider; Fecteau, Ryan; Gay, Jared; Pingree, Hannah; Heather Spalding; Hickman, Craig; Jeff Levine; John Napolitano; Karen Lawlor; Kate Dufour; Madeline Hill; Peter Merrill; Pouliot, Matthew; Prawer, Samuel; Rep. Amy Arata; Rochelo, Megan; Schneider, Deirdre; Sen. Matt Pouliot; Zox, Izabella; Risler, Hillary
Subject: FW: Email Testimony

Good Morning Commission Members,

Please find below email testimony that Sen. Hickman recently received and requested I forward to the rest of the commission.

-Sam

From: Michael Davis <coachdavis@me.com>
Sent: Monday, September 27, 2021 7:42 AM
To: Hickman, Craig
Subject: Affordable Housing in Maine

This message originates from outside the Maine Legislature.

Good morning, Senator Hickman,

Our names are Mandi & Mike Davis. We are residents of Maine, who have recently dealt with this affordable housing issue which you plan to address through your work as Senate Chair on the Commission to Increase Housing Opportunities in Maine by Studying Zoning and Land Use Restrictions.

Below, we share the text of a message we sent to Governor Mills on 2 September 2021 (and have yet to receive a reply):

“Dear Governor Mills,

Our names are Mandi & Mike Davis. We are a semi-retired couple living in Maine.

Over the past 5 years or so, we have watched the boom of Airbnb and similar services negatively impact the rental market in Maine - as well as negatively impact the hospitality businesses in our state. Then, during the COVID pandemic and the associated “Work From Home” (WFH) movement, even more pressure was placed on Maine housing stock.

We work in the outdoor retail industry with lots of young Mainers. Over the past year, we would hear about their struggles finding affordable housing. Most decent rentals have shifted to Airbnb status, and now the

WFH movement creates even more competition with wealthy, professionals relocating to Maine along with their urban incomes in tow. Our working class Mainers cannot compete with others on the escalating housing costs in Maine. It is common for the individuals we know to dedicate 40% to 50% of their gross monthly income to housing costs - and that is with roommates and IF they can find a vacant apartment.

During COVID, we were furloughed from our jobs, chose to retire early and moved Downeast to live on a remote island to weather the pandemic. We are now moving back to mid-coast Maine, and are under contract to buy land upon which to build a tiny, sustainable home. It will be 12- to 18-months before our home will be constructed, so we are looking to rent an apartment for that duration.

This is where what we were hearing from our young co-workers really hit home to us. We now are experiencing the same challenges to find an affordable rental. Not only are there few rentals available, but the cost ranges around \$1200 to \$1500 per month, often times NOT including utilities. For each available rental, we are competing with dozens of other applicants. And, to make matters more challenging, landlords are asking for 1st month, last month, and a security deposit up front. For a \$1200/month apartment, that means \$3600 BEFORE you even move into the place.

As we discovered during the pandemic, it was determined that most Americans could not absorb an unexpected \$400 expense. This reality drove the need for the CARES and ARP programs to help support struggling citizens. How in the world can most Mainers afford the start-up costs of renting an apartment?

We are writing to ask what your administration is doing to combat these housing issues in Maine.

What might be done to limit the use of Airbnb and other listing services that take rental properties offline (and negatively impact the Maine hospitality industry, too)?

What might be done to place a cap on the escalating costs of rental housing (for example, one apartment we pursued was listed for \$1100/month just a few months ago, and today is now listed for \$1500/month - clearly landlords are profiteering off this demand for housing)?

What might be done to level the playing field between Maine residents competing with out-of-staters coming to Maine to WFH at higher wages than our locals - and capturing the housing market?

What might be done to promote Community Land Trusts to help Mainers purchase a home in a subsidized development? Might this not only include traditional housing in Community Land Trusts (for example the CLT in Kennebunk provides the land, but the homes built on the land are still in the \$300,000 price range - not many Mainers can afford that), but also tiny homes and even yurts? Mainers need affordable housing not subsidized BIG homes!

What might be done to update our local zoning ordinances to make affordable, tiny home developments possible? For example, when we purchased our land, we were required to purchase a minimum of 3.5 acres of land - just for one tiny house to be built? These requirements seem grossly outdated for today's housing needs.

Sure does seem as though we need creative solutions to our current housing crisis in Maine. And, in this message, we have not even addressed the eviction crisis that is brewing.

Thank you, Governor Mills, and we look forward to opening a dialogue with you and your staff on the matter of affordable housing in Maine.

Mandi & Mike Davis“

We would be happy to meet with your Commission to share our experience, and thank you for taking action on this important matter.

Mandi & Mike Davis

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Sent from my iPad