



January 4, 2024

The Honorable Gov. Janet Mills
1 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04330

Dear Governor Mills,

As business owners, we're writing to share our support for rent relief to help our workers and customers find and keep affordable places to live.

We know you care about keeping Maine an affordable place for families and businesses to thrive. The investments your administration has made to support building affordable housing and the unhoused are well placed, but we can see that Maine continues to have huge unmet housing needs. Nearly one in three Maine workers who rent a home or apartment pay more than one-third of their income toward housing.¹

Higher rents hurt our ability to [attract and retain workers](#), put pressure on local governments and tax bases to help people who lose their homes, and hurt customer spending as family budgets are squeezed. Our schools are facing new levels of child poverty and student homelessness. Maine is not the only state dealing with high housing costs and homelessness, but we have the terrible distinction of being the state with the [greatest increase in families with kids](#) who lost their home between 2020-2022.

We ask you to prioritize rent relief as part of your budget, to help people and businesses right away – most evictions right now are because families have fallen a few hundred dollars behind on rent. It will help more people, including the workers we want to hire, afford to live in homes being built now. In other words, rent relief would close an affordability [gap between high rents](#)

¹ Maine Center for Economic Policy Analysis of US Census Bureau, American Community Survey microdata, 2022 1-year sample.

[and incomes](#) and help Maine build a healthier housing market, more stable workforce, and stronger communities all over our state.

In principle, a rent relief program should be state-wide, so every community, rural or urban, can get reliable help. It should help shift some of the housing needs pressuring locally-administered programs like General Assistance by being a sustained program, not temporary. And it should be thoughtfully targeted to the people who need help the most, whose incomes are not keeping up with high rents.

Maine’s housing crunch is [affecting all businesses](#), regardless of our size or the type of business we operate. As business owners, we are doing what we can to support our employees and foster a robust workforce. Some businesses have invested money in [providing their own workforce housing](#), some have co-signed lease agreements for employees to keep them housed, and some of us have even boarded employees in our families’ homes. While these are creative solutions to a major problem, these solutions are not sustainable for our workforce or our businesses – especially for small businesses.

Rent relief is a smart investment because housing stability is closely linked to economic stability. When families spend a large portion of their income on housing, they struggle to pay for necessities such as food, transportation, and healthcare (not to mention the impact on recreational spending on dining out and retail shops). We want to be able to hire more easily, we want our employees to be able to live closer to where they work, and we want families who are pinched by high housing prices to afford to shop with us and meet their basic needs.

Thank you for considering our support for rent relief in your budget!

Signed,

All Strung Out	Heidi Tasker, Owner	Danville
And How	Shaun Donnelly, Creative Partner	Arundel
Arabica Coffee Company	Catherine Rasco, President	Portland
Arcadia National Bar	Dave Aceto, Co-Owner	Portland
Bar Harbor Community Farm	Gary Friedmann, Partner	Bar Harbor
Belfast Dental Care	Allison Piper DMD, Owner	Belfast
Black Owned Maine	Rose Barboza, Executive Director	Portland
Bread & Friends	Jess Rattey, Owner	Portland
Briar & Bone	Inge Graham, Owner/President	Biddeford

Brighter Heights Maine	Jill McKenney, Executive Director	Yarmouth
Cat Bates Jewelry	Cat Bates, Owner	Biddeford
Central Street Farmhouse	Josh Parda, Owner	Bangor
Chaval and Ugly Duckling	Ilma Lopez, Owner	Portland
Cocktail Mary	Isaac MacDougal, Owner	Portland
Community Concepts	Jim Martin, CEO	Lewiston
Conscious Revolution	Tara Jenkins, Founder	Portland
Dextrous Creative	Tracie Reed, President	Portland
Dignity First	Jamie Beck, Executive Director	Bangor
Eastern Maine Development Corporation	Lee Umphrey, President & CEO	Bangor
Gateway Community Services	Abdullahi Ali, CEO	Portland
Gross Confection Bar	Brant Dadaleares, Chef/owner	Portland
Halcyon Built	Justin Tourigny, Owner	Portland
Healing Routes	Priscilla Skerry, President	South Portland
J.Brown & Son's Trucking LLC	Joseph Brown, Owner/Operator	Orneville
Jackimovicz Electric	Alexander Jackimovicz, Owner	Boothbay
JAK DESIGNS	Jennifer Armstrong, Co-Owner	Kennebunkport
Jessie Greenbaum Therapeutic Massage	Jessie Greenbaum, Sole Proprietor	Mount Desert
Kaplan & Grant	Benjamin Grant, Owner/Partner	Portland
Kennebec Valley Community Action Program	Suzanne Walsh, CEO	Waterville
Lifeline for ME, LLC	Amanda Ricci, Owner	Livermore Falls
Manifest Identity	Linda Gifford, CEO/Publishing Consultant	Damariscotta
Marlaina's Confections	Brandy Staples, Owner	Phippsburg
MDI Imported Car Service, Inc.	David White, Owner/Manager	Bar Harbor
Molten Ceramics	Bea Willemsen, Owner	Portland
My ChildCare	Kahina Albuquerque, Manager	Bath

New Pioneer LLC	Rachel Phipps, Member/Manager	Sanford
New Ventures Maine	Janet Smith, Executive Director	Augusta
Nilotic	Riko Bol, Founder and Executive Director	Greater Portland
Patty Kidder's Tax Preparation	Patricia Kidder, Owner	Springvale
Penquis	Kara Hay, President and CEO	Bangor
PocketBean LLC	Andrew Lygo-Yarn, Owner/Artist	Sanford
Portland Hunt + Alpine Club	Briana & Andrew Volk, Co-Owners	Portland
Portland Paddle	Zack Anchors, Owner	Portland
Print: A Bookstore	John Christie, co-owner	Portland
Raise-Op Housing Cooperative	Craig Saddlemire, Development Organizer	Lewiston
Recycling Retro	Katherine Missal, Owner	Woolwich
ReVision Energy	Phil Coupe, Co-founder	South Portland
Ritual Bakehouse and Patisserie	April Robinson, Owner	Brunswick
Root Rind and Petal LLC	Jennifer Fitzpatrick, Owner	Brunswick
Rosario's	Rosario Vitanza, Owner/Sole Proprietor	Bristol
Spurwink Services	Eric Meyer, CEO	Portland
The Haredresser	Lelia Carroll, Owner/Operator	Kennebunk
The Vicarage By The Sea	Johanna Wigg, President	Harpwell
Tiny Cairns	Heather McKenzie, Owner	Fryeburg
Veneer Services Unlimited	John Costin, Owner	Sanford
Waldo CAP	Ryan Jackson, Director of Community Services	Belfast
Wellspring	Suzanne Farley, Executive Director	Bangor
Western Maine Community Action	Jim Trundy, Executive Director	East Wilton