



MaineHousing

Maine State Housing Authority

Testimony of

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before the

Joint Standing Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research, and Economic Development

regarding

Nomination to be Director of the Maine State Housing Authority

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The mission of MaineHousing is to assist Maine people in obtaining and maintaining quality affordable housing and services suitable to their housing needs.

Good afternoon Senator Volk, Representative Fecteau, and members of the Labor, Commerce, Research, and Economic Development Committee.

My name is Dan Brennan and I am honored to be here today to discuss my nomination as Director of the Maine State Housing Authority.

I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to Governor LePage for nominating me for this position. I am truly grateful for the opportunity.

Before taking your questions today, I thought I would share a few words about myself, my background, and my qualifications for this position. I will then share a few thoughts about my vision for leading the agency and some things I think are important as I look at this opportunity.

I am originally from Massachusetts. I grew up in the Town of Sandwich on Cape Cod. The Cape is a crowded place and upon graduating from high school I was looking to get away from the congestion. I came across a brochure in our lunchroom at school one day for the University of Maine in Orono and I was immediately interested. After some careful thought, I applied and soon thereafter I was off to Orono, Maine. I had never had such a long car ride! What began as an anxiety filled separation from my home on the Cape grew into the best experience of my life. I enjoyed four wonderful years at Orono, earned a bachelor's degree in business management, and little did I know at the time...fell in love with Maine.

I began my career at the Bank of New England, overseeing their credit card production department in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Here I learned about high level security protocols (our vault contained

over 1 million blank credit cards!), the need for pinpoint accuracy and accountability, and managing people.

I quickly realized I missed Maine and decided to transfer within Bank of New England to Maine National Bank in Portland, where I joined their internal audit department. Here I learned how a bank works and the importance of strong internal controls.

It was the early 1990's and banks were failing left and right. Maine National Bank collapsed as part of the Bank of New England failure and although I managed to stay employed at the bank's successors, I felt I needed a more stable employer for my young and growing family.

I answered a blind ad for an internal auditor for a "\$1.2 billion financial institution in central Maine." I had no idea when I applied, but it was Maine State Housing Authority.

I joined MaineHousing in 1993, but at the time had no real passion for affordable housing or the agency's mission. I just knew it had a rock solid balance sheet and that was good enough for me.

It didn't take long, however, for the mission of MaineHousing and the passion for helping others to take root in me. My colleagues at MaineHousing are among the smartest, hardest working, passionate housing professionals in the country! I was so proud to have found such a great organization.

I was entering my 30's and it occurred to me that I finally discovered what really makes me tick. I was able to use my God-given abilities to help and serve others less fortunate than I. How great is that? I can honestly say I love coming to work every day and I have for the last 25 years.

I spent my first seven years at MaineHousing establishing and running the internal audit function. I earned the “certified internal auditor” designation from the Institute of Internal Auditors and really learned, in detail, how MaineHousing works. I advised the Director and agency leadership, I reported directly to the Board of Commissioners, and I was really able to impact some very important areas. One project helped reduce the paperwork burden on our lending partners by nearly 50% in our First Home Loan program!

In 2000, I became Director of our Asset Management department, leading a team of nearly 30 professionals overseeing and ensuring the health of over 750 multi-family projects, where nearly 20,000 Maine households reside. Here I learned the intricacies of federal rules and regulations, how important good property management practices are in helping renters succeed, and where I established important relationships with Maine’s real estate management community.

In 2005, I was asked to assume responsibility for our multi-family development efforts, overseeing a team of loan underwriters and construction analysts. Over the next ten years, I oversaw the financing of over 125 projects, creating or preserving nearly 4,000 units of housing, totaling nearly \$700 million in total financing in some of the most complex financing arrangements imaginable. Projects included:

- The Mill at Saco Falls in Biddeford;
- Bessey School in Scarborough;
- Cony High School in Augusta;
- The Maples at Mayflower in Sanford;
- Pierce Place in Lewiston; and
- Florence House in Portland.

During these years, I established critical relationships with housing developers, investors, attorneys, consultants and state and municipal officials.

In 2015, John Gallagher asked me to lead our Energy and Housing Services department. Here I worked closely with Maine's Community Action Agencies who help tens of thousands of Maine households heat, repair, weatherize and keep their homes safe from harmful substances like lead paint and arsenic. During this time I saw first-hand the conditions in which some people in Maine actually live. It only bolstered my resolve that we need to do more and stay focused on the task at hand.

The following year, John asked me to join our Executive Leadership team as the Senior Director of Programs, my current position. In addition to overseeing the Energy and Housing Services Department, I began to oversee our Homeless Initiatives and Housing Choice Voucher Departments. I travelled the state and visited each of Maine's homeless shelters and established vital relationships with shelter directors and homeless housing advocates. While we are doing some really impressive things in Maine around homelessness, this challenge needs to remain one of our highest priorities. Most recently, upon John's retirement, I was given oversight of our single family and multifamily departments, bringing me back full circle to where I spent my earlier years.

As I look ahead to the opportunity to lead this great agency, I am committed to the following:

- To continue the strategic direction established under John Gallagher's leadership;
- To maintain our sound fiscal management and cost containment strategies in our programs;
- To ensure we maintain our focus on being lean, efficient, and smart in the use of our resources by using data driven, best practice models; and

- To maintain our ability to quickly respond to the affordable housing needs of Maine citizens as those needs change over time.

We have great leadership from our Board of Commissioners and an outstanding staff of dedicated and knowledgeable housing professionals. It would be my honor to lead this agency as we tackle the affordable housing challenges that lie ahead.

I look forward to your questions and our discussion this afternoon.