

MIRC POLICY PRIORITIES 2024 -2026 Legislative Session Framework

Housing Access and Stability

Background:

Access to affordable housing has been a top priority for Maine residents for a number of years. The state has taken steps to alleviate some of the issues and encourage future construction of the housing supply. Shelters in Southern Maine are constantly full as people struggle to find affordable housing. Transitional Services are stretched thin in some places and non-existent in most of the state. Recent reports indicate that Maine needs to build between **38,500 and 84,000 new homes by 2030** to meet current and future demand. It is a top priority for our coalition that those who reside in our communities have the opportunity to find a place they can call home.

Goal: Create pathways for immigrants and working-class Mainers to have access to safe, affordable, and stable housing.

Talking Points:

- Immigration plays a significant role in the demand and supply of the U.S. housing market, **contributing** to economic growth and **revitalizing** neighborhoods.
- However, the relationship between immigration and housing costs is often oversimplified and has become increasingly **politicized**. While immigrants do contribute to rising housing demand, they are not the **primary drivers** of increasing housing costs.
- Factors such as housing shortages, restrictive zoning laws, and shifts in housing preferences are more dominant forces behind rising prices. Furthermore, immigrant workers are essential to the housing supply, making up a crucial segment of the **construction workforce** that can address shortages and improve housing stock.

Policy Objectives:

- **Affordable Housing Development:** Advocate for increased state funding and construction of affordable housing units, particularly in areas with high immigrant populations and **historic underproduction**.
- **Tenant Protections and Resources:** Strengthen anti-displacement policies and tenant rights, including safeguards against unfair evictions, rental discrimination, and General Assistance.
- **Emergency Housing Programs:** Expand support for shelter employees, those in shelters, and transitional housing programs while reducing barriers to accessing assistance.
- **• oning Reform:** Promote inclusionary zoning policies to increase affordable housing stock and combat exclusionary practices.

Importance:

The **lack of affordable housing can make it difficult for:**

- Employers to fill job openings
- Seniors to downsize and age in place
- Young people to remain in or return to the communities in which they grew up
- People in Maine to settle down and make meaningful contributions to their communities

MISSION STATEMENT

To improve the legal, social, and economic conditions experienced by Maine's immigrants – enhancing their lives while strengthening Maine – through advocacy, information sharing, and collaboration both through and among our member organizations