

Testimony: Support HB 1707

Andrew Horn of Amherst, NH

“Property is a Trust, Not a Fortress”

As delivered Monday, January 12th, 2026 in the committee hearing

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I come before you as someone who believes every decision must be weighed in both dollars and decency. I speak today in support of HB1707.

Now, I know many of you have heard from people who fear this tax. Their concerns are real, and we should listen. But I ask you: what about the teacher who can't afford to live in the town where she teaches? What about the firefighter who drives two hours to protect a community that has no home for him? What about the children who can no longer afford to live in the towns where they grew up? What about the grandparents who want to downsize and stay near their grandchildren, but can't?

These are our neighbors. And they are suffering.

The opposition calls this double taxation. I call it something else: a tax on dead wood. These empty homes—unoccupied for six months or more—are dead wood choking the living forest of our towns. They are houses that do not breathe. They shelter no families. They build no community.

Remember this: a right to own is not a right to empty. Property is a trust, not a fortress.

Let me give you the numbers, because they tell a story we cannot ignore. Home prices are up 76 percent since 2019. We are short 23,500 housing units. Our rental vacancy rate is just 1 percent—when 5 percent is considered balanced. Fifty-one percent of renters are cost-burdened, paying more than they can afford. And homelessness jumped 52 percent in just one year.

Some worry this bill will bring in big corporations. But look around—who's already being driven out? It's the nurse, the police officer, the everyday worker. So I ask you: shall we preserve property, or shall we preserve community?

What good is it to gain a tax break and lose your neighbor?

Some say this betrays our motto, "Live Free or Die." But I ask you: can we call ourselves free when our children cannot afford to live here? When homeless people die because they cannot live free?

We stand at a crossroads. If we preserve lifelessness, our towns become museums for the wealthy. Our workers become commuters. Our children become exiles. But if we choose people over property, we make our houses breathe again. We build a New Hampshire where all may live.

The choice is clear. You can vote with those saying "don't touch my second home," or you can vote with the young couple who can't afford their first. You can preserve property values, or you can preserve community. You can protect the right to own lifeless houses, or you can protect the right to live in breathing ones.

We cannot escape history. The suffering of our neighbors will mark us.

So I ask you, members of this committee: are we a state of homes, or a state of merely houses?

Let us be remembered as the generation that chose people over property. I urge you: vote Ought To Pass on HB1707. Let our houses breathe again.

Thank you.