



FOOD & HOUSING

Legislation and policies passed by Gov. Janet Mills and Democratic leaders in the Legislature are seeking to address the affordable housing crisis and food insecurity by putting Maine families first.

- **Food for low-income Mainers.** In 2019, Governor Mills stood by Mainers by opposing a Trump administration-era proposal to [restrict food stamps](#) that would have left 45,000 Mainers without food assistance.
- **Feeding all Maine school children.** In 2022, Maine became one of the first states in the U.S. to provide universal school meals to [all Maine public school students](#), regardless of their ability to pay. The initiative builds on a pandemic-era program that provided 3 million more meals to school children in 2021. Educators say the program is already having [a positive impact](#).
- **Property tax relief for seniors.** Property tax relief was given to thousands of Mainers over 65 who earn less than \$40,000 annually. Through the legislation passed by Gov. Janet Mills, [the state will pay the property taxes](#) for people who qualify, and the taxes will be repaid to the state when the property is sold or the participant passes away.
- **New senior housing.** The Mills Administration released [\\$15 million](#) in affordable housing bonds for seniors to support weatherization efforts and accessibility upgrades. Voters approved the bonds in 2015, but the previous administration [refused to release](#) them. The bonds supported new construction that has [tripled the number of affordable homes](#) for seniors in the state.
- **Energy and Heating Cost Relief.** Gov. Mills utilized state and federal resources to help low-and-moderate-income Mainers combat the rising costs of oil and gas by [weatherizing their homes](#) and providing [utility credits](#) and [heating assistance](#) to at-risk families. And Democrats in the Legislature passed [a bill](#) that makes it easier for low-income Mainers to apply for the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP).
- **Housing support through COVID-19.** Mainers at risk of default, foreclosure, or displacement as a result of COVID-19 found relief through a \$50 million [Homeowner Assistance Fund](#), announced by Gov. Mills, Rep. Pingree, and Sen. King, that helped keep Mainers in their homes during the pandemic.

- **Affordable Rental Housing.** \$20 million dollars from the Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan were allocated to expand the availability of [affordable rental housing](#) across rural Maine. The Rural Affordable Rental Housing Program provides funding for smaller, affordable rental housing between 5 and 18 units. The funds carry 0% interest, forgivable loans, and funding for acquisition and rehabilitation of existing units.
- **Housing Shortage.** Governor Mills enacted a Commission to explore ways to develop more [single-family and multifamily affordable housing](#). Based on that committee's recommendation, Democrats passed a bill that allows municipalities to pass measures that allow property owners to build accessory dwelling units on their land and expand zoning rules to allow for the development of up to two units on lots zoned for single-family housing.
- **Supporting Farmers and Food Processors.** As part of the Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan, Governor Mills approved [\\$20 million in grant funding](#) to support Maine food suppliers making necessary infrastructure updates to increase in-state food processing and production.