

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Judiciary Committee,

We are writing today to urge you to support LD 847, An Act to Prohibit Housing Discrimination. This bill closes a legislative loophole that allows landlords to discriminate against potential tenants based on their source of income and ensures that critical housing funding is usable for people who need it.

Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs) are designed to support families in securing and maintaining accessible, safe, and affordable housing in the communities they choose. Every year, Maine is allocated millions of dollars in federal funding for this program, but numerous barriers impede this funding from having the impact it should. Recent estimates indicate that Maine's voucher success rate hovered around 64% between 2018 and 2022, meaning that more than 1 in 3 households could not find a unit before their voucher expired.¹

In 2017, the American Bar Association urged all levels of government, from local, state, and federal, to prohibit discrimination in housing based on source of income; these protections are foundational to the success of the Housing Choice Voucher program. A 2018 study tested voucher acceptance rates and found "clear evidence of discrimination,"² and research from 2022 showed landlords were more likely to discriminate in neighborhoods with lower vacancy rates.³ Evidence suggests the ability to successfully use a voucher increases when sources of income protections are in place. This can be seen in Vermont, a state that added a source of income protections for HCV participants in 2012, and has a voucher success rate of 74%, 10% above Maine's rate.⁴

Passing this legislation will protect Maine tenants while also ensuring that taxpayer dollars are being effectively applied to their intended purpose. On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we urge you to pass LD 847 so Maine can join the 20 states and 100+ local municipalities with source-of-income protections.

Thank you for your leadership,



Andrew Lardie, Tedford Housing

John Brautigam, Legal Services for Maine Elders



Antonia Fasanelli,
National Homelessness Law Center

¹ Calculated from voucher success rate data set <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/pdredge/pdr-edge-featd-article-072425.html>

² Cunningham, M., Galvez, M., Aranda, C.L., Santos, R., Wissoker, D.A., Oneto, A.D., Pitingolo, R. and Crawford, J., 2018. A Pilot Study of Landlord Acceptance of Housing Choice Vouchers. Washington, DC: US Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research. <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/pilot-study-landlord-acceptance-hcv.html>

³ Hangen, Forrest & O'Brien, Daniel. (2022). The Choice to Discriminate: How Source of Income Discrimination Constrains Opportunity for Housing Choice Voucher Holders. Urban Affairs Review. 59.

⁴ Calculated from voucher success rate data set <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/pdredge/pdr-edge-featd-article-072425.html>

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