



May 15, 2023

Testimony of John Brautigam, Esq., Legal Services for the Elderly, in support of L.D. 1904 An Act to Enact the Maine Fair Chance Housing Act.

On behalf of Legal Services for the Elderly I would like to offer brief comments in support of LD 1904. Legal Services for the Elderly (LSE) is a nonprofit legal services organization, and our mission is to provide free legal assistance to Maine's older adults when their basic human needs are threatened. Some of our clients are formerly incarcerated persons.

LD 1904 is a balanced, incremental step toward modestly improving housing options for those who are formerly incarcerated. After a person has paid their debt to society, many find it difficult to fully re-enter life as a productive, contributing member of the community. In addition to the stigma of living as a formerly incarcerated person, this population encounters hurdles to employment, housing, and other necessary activities of daily living.

This bill does not guarantee housing for the formerly incarcerated. It does not prevent a landlord from inquiring about a person's criminal history. It only asks the landlord not to automatically exclude all such people from consideration as the first question on an application. This is like the checkbox on some employment applications inquiring about criminal history. This measure would be lodged in the Maine Human Rights Act.

The formerly incarcerated population includes persons who have committed crimes of violence, and it may also include those who committed non-violent crimes. Often the landlord's inquiry does not distinguish.

We support LD 1904 as a modest step toward helping this population into housing.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to make these comments.

**LEGAL SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY, INC.**  
5 Wabon Street, Augusta, Maine 04333  
(207) 621-0087 Fax (207) 621-0742  
Offices in Augusta, Bangor, Lewiston, Biddeford and Presque Isle  
LSE Helpline 1-800-750-5353 (Voice/TTY)  
[www.mainelse.org](http://www.mainelse.org)