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United Way  
of Southern Maine



Good afternoon, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Annika Moore, and I am the Advocacy Team Leader at Preble Street. Preble Street's mission is to provide accessible, barrier-free services to empower people experiencing problems with homelessness, housing, hunger, and poverty and advocate for solutions to these problems.

I am writing to support LD 847, which would promote housing stability and advance the goals of the Housing Choice Voucher program.

The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program was created to help low-income renters secure safe, stable housing and give them more choices in where they live. Theoretically, a voucher holder should be able to move into any market-rate apartment in their area. However, the prevalence of anti-voucher policies among landlords means that many tenants apply to dozens of apartments before they find one that accepts their voucher. This undermines the purpose of Housing Choice Vouchers by limiting the options available to recipients. If this bill were to pass, voucher holders would more quickly be able to find safe, secure housing.

Maine would better comply with national fair housing laws by prohibiting housing discrimination based on source of income. Though it may not be the landlord's intent, refusing to rent to voucher holders disproportionately impacts tenants with disabilities, tenants of color, and families with children. Because individuals in these groups are more likely to receive a voucher, they are also more likely to face barriers in finding housing. For this reason, source of income protections would work to reduce systemic inequalities.

Research has shown that housing non-discrimination legislation reduces voucher holders' denials. In jurisdictions with these laws, individuals and families encounter fewer barriers to housing. We can solve Maine's unsheltered homelessness crisis by removing stigma and misunderstanding and focusing on compassionately connecting people to housing.

Preble Street urges you to vote in support of LD 847 and allow Maine to join the 19 other states that prohibit housing discrimination based on source of income.