



TESTIMONY OF ALICIA REA, ESQ.
LD 1036 – Ought To Pass

**An Act to Protect Recipients of Public Assistance
from Housing Discrimination**

Joint Standing Committee on
Housing and Economic Development

May 6, 2025

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Senator Curry, Representative Gere and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development, greetings. My name is Alicia Rea, and I am a policy fellow for the American Civil Liberties Union of Maine, a statewide organization committed to advancing and preserving civil liberties guaranteed by the Maine and U.S. Constitutions. On behalf of our members, I urge you to support LD 1036, legislation that would expand the civil rights of renters in Maine.

The Housing Choice Voucher program is the nation's largest rental housing program. It is a program that requires a public-private partnership by providing vouchers for people living in poverty to supplement their rent payments to private landlords. Yet all too often this endeavor by the federal government is a public program without private partners, because there is no prohibition in many states against landlords rejecting renters solely because they use public assistance to pay for their housing. Even though vouchers provide payment guaranteed by the government, landlords refuse to rent to people because of biases against people living in poverty.

Consistent with its motto, *Dirigo*, Maine was an early adopter of legislation prohibiting housing discrimination of this sort. In 1975, the Maine Human Rights Act was amended to prohibit discrimination against renters who receive federal, state or local public assistance.¹ Unfortunately, in *Dussault v. RRE Coach Lantern Holdings*, the Law Court interpreted this section so as to virtually make it meaningless.² Because of the Law Court's decision, landlords in Maine may discriminate against renters because the renters hold vouchers. All too often, this leads people who have the means to rent an apartment with a voucher without a place to rent.

¹ 5 M.R.S. § 4581-A.

² *Dussault v. RRE Coach Lantern Holdings*, 2014 ME 8.



We urge you to vote *ought to pass*.