

Mayor and Council Offices

Mark Dion

Mayor

April 8, 2025



Testimony of Mayor of the City of Portland, Mark Dion

Before

Committee on Housing and Economic Development

In Support of

LD 1036, An Act to Protect Recipients of Public Assistance from Housing Discrimination

April 8, 2025

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and the esteemed members of the Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the City of Portland to express strong support for LD 1036, An Act to Protect Recipients of Public Assistance from Housing Discrimination.

This bill would add “lawful source of income” as a protected class under Maine’s Fair Housing Act. It is a straightforward and long-overdue measure to ensure that Mainers who receive public assistance, including housing vouchers, General Assistance, Social Security, or disability benefits, are not arbitrarily denied the right to rent a home based solely on how they pay for it.

As the largest and most diverse city in the state, Portland has seen firsthand the impacts of discrimination against voucher holders and individuals who rely on public support to secure housing. We know from both anecdotal evidence and public testimony that families with Section 8 vouchers are frequently turned away by landlords, even when they meet all other leasing criteria. These practices perpetuate housing instability and reinforce patterns of racial and economic segregation in our city and across Maine.

Portland’s General Assistance program supports hundreds of residents each year who are in transition, recovering from crisis, or working toward housing stability. When landlords refuse to accept these forms of support, the consequences are not merely inconvenient; they are devastating. Denials force individuals into shelters, create bottlenecks in social services, and undermine public investments in housing security.

The City of Portland has adopted local protections against source-of-income discrimination, but the problem is not confined within city limits. A statewide approach is necessary to ensure that renters across Maine are treated fairly and that public dollars meant to keep people housed are actually accepted in the rental market.

LD 1036 is not about creating new entitlements or financial burdens for landlords. It is about ensuring that qualified tenants, many of whom are seniors, people with disabilities, working parents, or asylum seekers, can access housing without facing blanket discrimination. This bill would bring Maine in line with over a dozen other states that already prohibit this practice and send a clear message that public assistance recipients deserve the same fair chance at housing as anyone else.

We urge the Committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1036 and affirm Maine's commitment to equity, dignity, and housing as a human right.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark Dion", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mark Dion
Mayor
City of Portland, Maine