

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

My name is Betsy Williams, I live in Brunswick, and I am here in support of LD 847, An Act to Prohibit Housing Discrimination.

As a member of the Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network, I speak from a faith tradition that centers love of neighbor and respect for the worth and dignity of every human being. Throughout the ages, as today, many faith traditions look to their civic leaders to honor these core tenets through public policies.

We hear a lot of talk about "discrimination" these days. As a concept it's become a divisive one among us. Some people perceive something as discrimination, while others perceive the same thing as fairness. Those two perceptions can be and are debatable.

But this bill, LD 847, is not about debatable perceptions, opinions, or political stands. It's about irrefutable discrimination: denial of access to available and affordable housing based solely on the *source* of one's income.

Under the current Maine Human Rights Act, landlords who engage in this discrimination are acting in violation of Title 5 Section 4581-A.* Apparently, and sadly, such a violation is not sufficient to assure that the rights of those most in need of affordable housing are honored.

We need our legislators to step in and do the right thing. We need you to honor the core principles of our democracy, that everyone has a right to choose where they live, where they work and where they send their children to school. We need you to heed the research of HUD that says protections against source-of-income discrimination decentralizes poverty in a way that builds stronger communities for us all. We need LD 847.

Please honor the core principles of our democracy and show respect and compassion for your fellow human beings. Please vote yes on LD 847.

Thank you.

*It is unlawful housing discrimination, in violation of the act: any person furnishing rental premises or public accommodations to refuse to rent or impose different terms of tenancy to any individual who is a recipient of federal, state or local public assistance, including medical assistance and housing subsidies, primarily because of the individual's status as recipient.