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## Maine Equal Justice

**People Policy Solutions**

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### **Testimony on behalf of Maine Equal Justice in *Support* of LD 1036, An Act to Protect Recipients of Public Assistance from Housing Discrimination**

**May 6, 2025**

Good morning, Senator Curry, Representative Gere, distinguished members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee. I'm Andrea Steward, (she/her/hers) a policy advocate at Maine Equal Justice nonprofit civil legal aid provider working to increase economic security, opportunity, and equity for people in Maine.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of LD 1036.

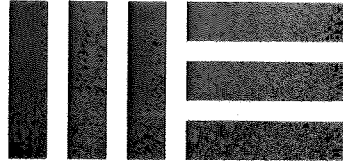
#### **Purpose of LD 1036**

LD 1036 seeks to amend the Maine Human Rights Act to explicitly prohibit discrimination in housing based on an individual's status as a recipient of federal, state, or local public assistance. This includes, but is not limited to, housing subsidies and medical assistance. The bill clarifies that such status is a protected class under Maine's anti-discrimination laws, ensuring that individuals are not denied housing opportunities solely because they receive public assistance or because of the requirements of public assistance.

#### **The Need for This Legislation**

Housing is a fundamental human right and a cornerstone for stability, health, and economic opportunity. Yet, many Mainers who rely on public assistance face barriers when seeking housing. Landlords may refuse to rent to individuals simply because they use housing vouchers or other forms of assistance, perpetuating cycles of poverty and limiting access to safe and affordable housing.

This form of discrimination disproportionately affects marginalized communities, including people of color, individuals with disabilities, and single-parent households. By codifying protections against such discrimination, LD 1036 aims to promote equity and ensure that all Mainers have fair access to housing, regardless of their income source.



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### **Addressing Concerns**

Some may argue that this legislation imposes undue burdens on landlords. However, it's important to note that LD 1036 does not prevent landlords from conducting standard tenant screenings or making business decisions based on legitimate factors such as rental references. It merely prohibits blanket refusals to rent based solely on the lawful source of a tenant's income.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, LD 1036 is a necessary step toward eliminating housing discrimination against recipients of public assistance in Maine. It aligns with our state's commitment to fairness and equal opportunity for all residents. I respectfully urge the Committee to support this bill and help ensure that every Mainer has a fair chance at securing safe and stable housing.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.