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# Maine Equal Justice

## People Policy Solutions

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### **Testimony on behalf of Maine Equal Justice in *Strong Support* to LD 2176, An Act to Safeguard Personal Information and Strengthen Tenant Rights in Maine**

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Good morning, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, members of the Judiciary Committee. I'm Andrea Steward (she/her/hers) a policy advocate at Maine Equal Justice, a 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 2176 to protect tenants personal information.

#### **Why Maine Equal Justice Supports LD 2176**

At its core, this bill recognizes that a lease agreement is a business arrangement for housing, not a license for a landlord to weaponize a tenant's sensitive personal data. By enacting Section 6025-B, Maine will take a necessary step in strengthening Maine's landlord-tenant statute to include the sharing of information—such as immigration status, sexual orientation, or health conditions—specifically intended to intimidate a tenant into vacating their home in the presumption of retaliation.

Renters already find themselves in an unequal power dynamic with their landlord, which exists regardless of the housing market, and only widens when a housing market is tight and finding new housing that is affordable is nearly impossible. When this is compounded by characteristics that make a tenant more vulnerable, such as their gender identity or a survivor of domestic violence, there are serious safety implications. All tenants have a right to privacy and a sense of safety in their homes. By adding the filing of a privacy violation to the actions protected under Maine's presumption of relation this ensures that tenants have enforceable rights if their privacy has been breached and personal information used inappropriately without the fear of eviction or other retaliation.

This bill is thoughtfully crafted and carefully balances the safety and rights of tenants and landlords. It does not prevent landlords from performing necessary business functions with common-sense exceptions for the disclosure of information in emergency circumstances or in

response to a judicial warrant. LD 2176 only penalizes disclosures made without *consent* and with the intent *to intimidate*. This protects the vast majority of Maine landlords who already following this and operate in good faith while providing a vital shield against those who would use a tenant's personal life as a tool for harassment.

## **Conclusion**

This legislation is imperative to protect populations in Maine who face the highest risk of harm. Your home should be the one place where you feel secure. No Mainer should have to choose between keeping their housing and keeping their private medical, financial, or personal information safe from retaliatory disclosure.

I urge the committee to vote Ought to Pass on this measure to ensure that Maine's privacy laws keep pace with the realities of the modern rental market.

Thank you for your time and I'm happy to answer any questions.