

**TESTIMONY OF SUSANNA RICHER  
IN SUPPORT OF  
L.D. 2158, “An Act to Improve the Housing Voucher System”  
Committee On Housing  
January 30, 2024**

Senator Pierce, Representative Geer, and distinguished members of the Committee:

Thank you for considering my testimony in strong support of L.D. 2158, “An Act to Improve the Housing Voucher System.”

Last week, I presented [testimony in support of L.D. 2136](#), which would increase critical funding for low barrier shelters in Maine. My comments included the story of my friend, Bruce, a United States Army veteran who currently “lives” under a tarp in front of Elena’s Way in Portland.

As previously mentioned, Bruce is eligible for a Section 8 housing voucher that covers up to \$1,800 a month in rent. However, there are no open rental units in the greater Portland area that accept these vouchers.

Currently, Bruce’s housing voucher is only valid for the Portland area, which severely limits his ability to find housing and save his own life. The wait time for Section 8 housing in this area is years ...which forces Bruce, and others like him, to remain at-risk, outside in the deadly elements.

L.D. 2158, as written, would *allow the Maine State Housing Authority or a municipal housing authority to issue housing vouchers that may be used upon issuance anywhere within the State*, thus greatly expanding the housing options for Bruce, as well as his chances of survival.

That we allow a veteran, or any human being, to live outside in the Maine elements when other options are possible, is a true failure of our government and society. Please pass this common sense, life saving bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Susanna Richer  
Portland, ME

## **References**

Testimony, L.D. 2136, Susanna Richer, 1.23.24

<https://legislature.maine.gov/backend/app/services/getDocument.aspx?doctype=test&documentId=10026937>