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Dear Committee on Labor and Housing,

Please support LD 473, An Act to Create the Maine Rental Assistance and Voucher Guarantee Program. Right now, the shortage of vouchers creates a sense of competition between people. It makes people who are waiting angry at people who have received assistance, or others who are applying. They wait for years to get the assistance they deserve, and it makes them resentful. Lots of people need help, and we know they're eligible for help, so why wouldn't we fully fund a program that we know people need? In the past, I experienced homelessness, and the Section 8 program helped my family get stable housing. But, I was able to get to the front of the waiting line because I'm a veteran, and veterans are prioritized on the waiting list. I was able to go to college and work part-time while on Section 8. Meanwhile, my mom was on the waiting list for years. Section 8 helped me, but it makes me feel bad that my mom and neighbors couldn't get a voucher because people like me got the voucher first. It shouldn't be set up that way. A person who needs a place to live, if they don't have good income or assistance, they cannot get an apartment because it's too expensive. You can't afford a \$1,000 month rent without help. Today, I'm an essential worker, fully employed in manufacturing, and have been looking for places to move with my family that are closer to where we work, and the rents are all really expensive. I no longer have housing assistance. I thought I was making enough money to afford market rent in Lewiston, and I'm not. I like the idea of the housing navigator, because it can be hard to know where to look for housing. Many people don't have the skills and resources to get a place on their own. I also know people who have lost their home. Right now, there are wind chills below zero degrees, which is cold enough to kill someone who is homeless. With COVID, usual places to get warm - like the library - are closed. Not having a safe place to live means it's easier to get sick, and floating around people can spread COVID or other infections. No one would leave their dogs or cats outside in this weather, why would we leave humans outside?