

Testimony in support of LD 473: An Act to Create the Maine Rental Assistance and Voucher Guarantee Program

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Sylvester, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing, my name is Catherine Culley, I am a Real Estate Developer and own several apartment buildings in Portland and I support LD 473.

I was an active participant with a group of people working on housing policy when the Quality Housing Coalition was established and Project HOME became a pilot project. This group included members of the affordable housing community as well as housing developers and various landlords. As professionals in this arena we know there are many potential tenants with great needs and many organizations are missing tools to help a vulnerable or 'challenging' into a typical market rate unit with no additional support.

Project HOME brings the pieces together from beginning to end, until a tenant is fully settled and successful: housing navigators and mentors help find available units, establish good working landlord tenant relationships, help with leasing up and moving in, and providing housing mentor check-ins once a month. Drug relapse, issues around the use of modern housing for those new to our country, trash removal, pest infestation, additional guests, etc. are some of the issues that arise that create unsuccessful tenancies which then fail. Project HOME has identified the gaps in pre-tenancy training and follow up housing coaching services that ensure an unprecedented level of housing success.

QHC provides the housing mentor support and the financial guarantees for each unit, which has increased private sector participation opening up units previously unavailable to house vulnerable tenants. I've had the opportunity to meet some of these tenants - such a single mom who was able to secure housing that was within walking distance of her child's daycare. Or the New Mainer QHC housed that is now pursuing a degree and was so relieved to have finally found a home for his family.

QHC has been integral in bringing the entire community of landlords and social services agencies together to solve homelessness. I am thrilled this grant application to provide funding for a housing coordinator position to be able to increase the capacity to support vulnerable tenants in South Portland through Project HOME is being considered and ask that you support this already successful initiative.

Respectfully Submitted,

Catherine Culley
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