

TO: The Honorable Joseph Rafferty, Chair  
The Honorable Mike Sylvester, Co-Chairs  
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing

DATE: March 3rd, 2021

RE: LD473 An Act To Create the Maine Rental Assistance and Voucher Guarantee Program

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Good afternoon, Senator Rafferty, Representative Sylvester, and honorable members of the joint standing committee on Labor and Housing.

My name is Lado Lodoka. I am here today to testify in support of LD 473 on behalf of the Immigrant Housing Coalition. The Immigrant Housing Coalition is a not for profit organization that supports affordable housing policy through education and advocacy.

People on rental assistance in general face a lot of challenges finding a place to rent in the current competitive markets because of the limited inventory of affordable housing in Maine.

LD 473 is not going to increase affordable housing in Maine, but it will increase the pool of landlords who will participate in subsidized housing. In the world of rental assistance, general assistance vouchers rank at the bottom, in terms of acceptance, by landlords and property management companies for the following reasons:

- City voucher is not guaranteed; it is based on monthly assessment of the applicant qualification.
- If the applicant misses scheduling an appointment for the month, for whatever reason, the landlord will lose out on a rent for that month.
- Rent payment is never on time, even if the tenant's appointment is at the first of the month, because of the time it takes to process the payment and the high demand for voucher processing.
- Rent payment is below market rate.
- Having service providers in and out of the property on a regular basis, depending on the need of the tenant, is not something that landlords appreciate.

LD 473 will make sure rental vouchers are guaranteed, so that it reduces risk on the property owners, and it gives credit for property damage up to \$2,000. It also provides tenants with housing navigators to assist in locating and maintaining homes.

Being poor is already challenging by itself and accessing resources designed to help should not present another hurdle to the people in need. Please vote in favor of and pass LD 473. Thank you.