

Colin March
Falmouth

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 Colin March, and I am a landlord partner of the Quality Housing Coalition and I support LD 473.

While there are many potential tenants with great needs, past experience with other organizations has highlighted the weaknesses of dropping a vulnerable or 'challenging' tenant 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 to help to 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.

It was not until QHC came along to provide the housing mentor supports and the financial guarantees for each unit, that the private sector has been such a willing and supportive partner in the mission to house our most vulnerable tenants.

QHC has been integral in bringing the entire community of landlords and social services agencies together to solve homelessness. We are extremely grateful and proud to be a partner. We fully support 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.

I believe that funding for a state housing vouchers is consistent with Maine's Economic Recovery Committee Report that recommends the need to invest in housing to support workforce development. Investing in housing means investing in landlords and tenants, and I am in full support of these efforts.