

Julia Bassett Schwerin  
Agents for the Built Environment

3 March 2021

Representative Sylvester

Senator Rafferty

Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing

Maine State Legislature, 130th Session

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

Representative Sylvester, Senator Rafferty, Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 473 An Act to Create the Maine Rental Assistance and Voucher Guarantee Program. My name is Julia Bassett Schwerin, I live in Cape Elizabeth, and I represent Agents for the Built Environment, an advocacy group. I am affiliated with Coldwell Banker Realty, and I am a REALTOR®, a member of the Greater Portland Board of Realtors, a chapter of the Maine Association of Realtors, the National Association of Realtors, and the Sustainability Advisory Group of the Greater Portland Board of Realtors, however I am not here representing the Realtor associations or any realty companies, rather Agents for the Built Environment.

We as a society are poised to do great things in the protection of our environment, things that have not been done on this scale since our great Senator Edmund Muskie helped pass the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts 50 years ago, and President Barack Obama helped 189 countries come together as signatories to the Paris Climate Accord 5 years ago. Today is even greater, because the cause of environmental justice is shoulder to shoulder with our goals of creating a net zero carbon environment. Housing is such a fundamental human right that we cannot imagine achieving environmental stability without environmental justice.

Just as we are working to use public funds to stimulate private sector financing for decarbonizing our built environment, LD 473 seeks to leverage public funds to support the private sector, in this case owners of rental housing, to make available more rental housing by reducing the risk of tenant failure. This bill addresses chronic issues in practical ways that I predict will stimulate the availability of more centrally located workforce housing, have significant economic returns, and create a more just society.

People do not need a job to get adequate housing, they need adequate housing to get and keep a job, attend school, and achieve the full life of which they are capable. I urge you to vote LD 473 ought to pass.

Thank you for considering my testimony, and for your work for the people of Maine.

Respectfully,

Julia Bassett Schwerin

Mainegreenbroker@gmail.com

Agents for the Built Environment