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## Testimony for LD 473: An Act To Create the Maine Rental Assistance and Voucher Guarantee Program

Hello Senator Rafferty, Representative Sylvester, and members of the Labor and Housing Committee:

I'm Trisha Smith from Dover-Foxcroft, and I'm writing to support LD473. The right to housing is basic to human life, and we have developed a society well able to meet everyone's needs. As our elected representatives, we're counting on you to expand funding to ensure safe, affordable housing for all Mainers.

There is not enough affordable housing in Maine and federal rental assistance resources are too limited. Over 20,000 households are on the waitlist for the Section 8 voucher program or other permanently affordable properties. 60% of extremely low income households pay more than 50% of their income towards housing costs.

LD 473 allows Maine Housing to use the funds to fill gaps in existing federal rental assistance and extend programs such as the Covid-19 emergency rental assistance program or the STEP program.

Even after getting federal rental assistance, many struggle to find housing that will accept vouchers. LD473 funds housing navigation, a proven, effective tool that helps those experiencing homelessness to get housing.

In Maine's rental market, landlords can fill their buildings without accepting vouchers. LD 473 includes voucher guarantee incentives to encourage landlords to work with the broad range of rental assistance programs around Maine.

The lack of safe, affordable housing constitutes a public health crisis, especially in a pandemic. Having a decent place to live is central to the health and well-being of all Mainers. Please support LD 473.