

MEMBERS

Alpha Management Corp
Auburn Housing Authority
Avesta Housing
Bangor Housing Authority
Barkan Management Co.
Bath Housing
Brewer Housing Authority
C & C Realty Management
C. M. Cimino Realty Inc.
C. S. Management, Inc
C.B. Mattson, Inc.
Caleb Foundation, The
CMHI Property Management Inc
Community Housing of Maine
DBH Management
DC Management
Deanna Morse Property
Management Inc
Deering Pavilion
Dover-Foxcroft Housing Dev Corp
Downeast Community Partners
Eagle Point Management, LLC
Ellen M Leach Memorial Home
Evernorth
Federal Management Co., Inc
Foothills Management
Forside Real Estate Mgt
Gary Buck Property Management
Guilford Development Corp
Hallkeen Management, Inc
Harbor Management
Harborview Management LLC
Hillside Apts
Housing Authority City of Old
Town
Housing Foundation, The
Kathryn Hughes Associates, Inc.
L & L Management
LaBrecque Property Management
Laplante Apartments
Lewiston Housing Authority
Madison Avenue Associates
Maine Development
Mary Young
Matthew Sherman Mem Apts



Testimony of Sherrin Vail

On Behalf of the Maine Real Estate
Managers Association

Before the Committee on Labor and
Housing

In Support of LD 473 with Amendments: An Act to Create the Maine
Rental Assistance and Voucher Guarantee Program

March 3, 2021

Representative Morales and all members of the Committee on Labor and Housing, my name is Sherrin Vail and I am writing to you as President of the Maine Real Estate Managers Association (MREMA).

Our organization is a nonprofit which represents over 80 professional management companies providing affordable housing throughout the state. It is within our mission to promote the availability of safe, decent affordable housing in Maine. Our management members are both for profit and nonprofit managers that believe in this mission.

Portable voucher programs are a staple of our industry, and we need more of them. They allow residents to choose where they want to live and what their housing will look like. LD 473 seeks to break down barriers for some residents who may not otherwise be eligible for housing due to credit and their ability to afford rents under other housing programs. LD 473 could be very successful with the right balance of protections for both the tenant and landlord. Voucher programs need to serve a dual purpose to be successful; providing rent subsidy to low-income individuals as well as creating value for landlords such that they will see the benefit of the program. As currently written, we are concerned that landlords would not engage in this program, vastly reducing those the bill is trying to serve.

To allow this program to become more feasible in practice, we suggest the following amendments:

Removing Barriers for Credit/Criminal and Prior Rental History

Most rental agencies will require a comprehensive background check which sets specific criteria for credit reports, requiring a lack of eviction history, and prohibiting a criminal history. LD 473 asks landlords to

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MCH Housing, Inc.
Mexico Senior Housing
Mike Eon Associates, Inc
Monroe Group
New Beginnings Inc
New England Developers, Inc.
Newell Investments
Northland Management Corp
Occupied Properties
Penobscot Nation Housing Dept.
Phoenix Management
Pines, The
Portland Housing Authority
Preservation Management Inc
Princeton Properties
R & K Oxford Management
R.L.W. Management, LLC
Realty Resources Management
Realty Services, LLC
Ricker Plaza
Saco Falls Management
Scovil Apartments
Shalom House
SHP Management Corp
South Portland Housing Authority
Spear Management Co
St. Amand, Roger & Eileen
St. John Valley Realty Co, LLC
Stanford Management
Sterling Management, Inc.
Stewart Property Management
Targeted Management Co., Inc.
Volunteers of America Northern
New England
Washburn Realty Company
Washington Street Apartments
Waterville Housing Authority
Westbrook Housing Authority
Yale Court, LP
York County Shelter Program

remove these screenings completely if they accept the voucher. MREMA agrees that these practices can create either intentional or implicit bias in housing certain individuals. While eliminating the practice completely would solve this, most landlords would not participate in this program if they were not allowed to access the information at all. We would suggest that landlords still be able to access the credit and background checks, however, are required to waive certain selection criteria should they choose to accept the voucher.

Not Evicting a Program Participant for Nonpayment of Rent During any Month for Which rental Assistance is Paid

Stable housing is a cornerstone of success in all other aspects of life. Individuals who live under the threat of eviction are not as successful as those who are confident in their long-term housing. LD 473 promotes stable long-term housing for vulnerable Mainers by having landlords waive their right to eviction for non-payment of rent if the rental assistance is paid. In the existing portable voucher programs, rent is paid in part by the agency offering the rental assistance and the remainder is paid by the tenant based on their income. As this bill is written, we assume that the Maine Rental Assistance program will operate on a similar income-based rent-sharing. In this case a landlord would have to agree to waive their right to evict if the tenant's portion of rent is unpaid if they received the voucher payment. A voucher program, which does not allow for a landlord to evict for non-payment will be prohibitive for landlords. We suggest that landlords instead be required to work with navigators and tenants on a payment arrangement before resorting to eviction, but ultimately the option of eviction would not be waived.

MREMA is in Support of LD 473 with amendments because as written it will not be palatable to landlords. However, given some changes, we believe this bill could help serve a population that is often overlooked in the affordable housing conversation. MREMA is willing to work with the interested parties on an amendment that addresses these concerns.

Thank you for your consideration, and please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sherrin Vail
Portland

Please find the attached testimony related to LD 473 of behalf of the Maine Real Estate Managers Association.