

Rights of Maine Renters - Discrimination

What is illegal discrimination?

Discrimination is when you are treated differently. Not all discrimination is illegal. But, some types of discrimination are illegal.

In this article, we explain illegal discrimination in housing in Maine. We use the term 'landlord' because it is easy to understand, but these laws apply to anyone involved in renting you your housing. Some examples are property managers, housing authorities, landlords, and any of their employees.

In Maine your landlord may not discriminate against you because of your:

- race;
- color;
- national origin;
- ancestry (where you or your family came from);
- religion;
- sex;
- sexual orientation;
- gender identity and gender expression;
- disability;
- living with minor children, an adult dependent, being pregnant, or adopting a minor child (called "familial status" in the law);
- getting public assistance (such as TANF, general assistance, SSI, HCV (formerly Section 8), or MaineCare);
- having a permanent Protection from Abuse Order; or
- protecting your or someone else's Fair Housing rights by taking action like making a complaint to the Maine Human Rights Commission or acting as a witness in a Fair Housing case.

These laws also protect you if someone thinks you belong to one of these protected groups, even if you do not. They also cover all people living in the United States no matter their immigration status.

This means that a landlord cannot refuse to rent to you, charge you extra, evict you, or deny you housing related services for any of these reasons.

What if I am being discriminated against for another reason?

Sometimes a landlord can discriminate against you or treat you differently in ways that are not fair, but are also not illegal housing discrimination. Some common examples are being treated differently because of:

- where you work or what you do for work;
- your political beliefs;

- your criminal record; or
- what your past landlord says about you.

These are not protected by the law, so even if it is unfair, it is not illegal for a landlord to treat you differently for these reasons.

There may be some situations where the reason for discrimination is very closely connected to one of the identities that is protected by the law. If this is your situation, contact Pine Tree Legal Assistance and we may be able to help.

What can I do about illegal housing discrimination?

If you think your landlord has illegally discriminated against you, [contact Pine Tree Legal](#).

If you would like to file a complaint about illegal housing discrimination, you can file with the Maine Human Rights Commission (MHRC) or the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Before you file, you should [read more about Fair Housing laws in our article "Fair Housing: Your Right to Rent or Own a Home"](#). This article will help you decide where to file your complaint, and explains the steps you will need to take.

Where can I learn more about illegal housing discrimination or my Fair Housing rights?

Pine Tree Legal has more information about how a landlord must treat you fairly if you have a mental or physical disability. [Learn more about your Fair Housing rights in Maine – we have a Fair Housing Unit and information available in many languages!](#)

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