

January 17, 2018

Senator Brakey, Representative Hymanson and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Brianna Nielsen and I live in Portland, Maine with my family. I am here today to testify in support of LD 1711, Resolve To Save Lives by Establishing a Homeless Opioid Users Service Engagement Pilot Project within the Department of Health and Human Services.

Let me start by saying that I am in recovery and I have been sober for 1 year, 10 months and 9 days. I have been able to maintain my sobriety because of a medication assisted treatment program at Maine Med and because I have a stable, safe apartment where I live with my son and my partner. I am very thankful for this program at Maine Med because they took me when I didn't have insurance.

I ended up homeless for three months with only the clothes on my back. I knew I had to make a change. I was scared. I went to a detox and then into rehab and I have been very successful in my sobriety since then. Even though being homeless was so difficult, I am now getting my life back on track. I have my own apartment. I am sober and am working very hard to stay clean. My son is with me and I work every day to be a good parent and to maintain a safe and loving home for my son.

Getting into my own apartment was so important for my recovery. I was lucky that I had access to a housing voucher and caseworkers at Preble Street helped me find an apartment and additional financial support for my security deposit.

I will be starting a job next week on January 24<sup>th</sup>! I will be doing peer support services helping other people find recovery. I am so excited to be getting back to work.

It has been a full time job to get my life back on track and to be successful in my recovery. I was fortunate enough to stay focused. And now because of that focus, I am able and ready to work and support my family.

A lot of people I know who are homeless and using opioids have a hard time staying focused because even if they get into detox or rehab, they are still living in the crisis of homelessness. I was lucky to be able to get into an IMAT program without insurance. I was lucky to get an apartment after only being homeless for 3 months. Not everyone I know is so lucky. When people are sleeping on mats in a crowded emergency shelter surrounded by drug use, it is so hard to find stability and peace. So many people I know who are homeless have tried to get treatment and housing and cannot find either. So many people I know have overdosed. I know many people who have died. I am so thankful that I am doing better and getting more and more stable each day. I want my friends and community members to have the same chance at life that I have had.

What is so important about LD 1711 is that people can get immediate access to treatment and housing from jail, the hospital or the street. This is exactly what they need to find greater

stability and success. LD 1711 will end the cycle of jail, homelessness, hospital, and death for people who are struggling with opioid use and homelessness.

Please support LD 1711 to save lives and help people who are victims of the opiate crisis have a chance to live again.

Thank you for your consideration.