

131st Maine Legislature

Joint Standing Committee on Housing

Testimony of Westbrook Housing Authority in Support of

LD 2 "An Act to End Chronic Homelessness by Creating the Housing First Fund"

04 April 2023

The last three years awareness of the increase in homelessness and the unsustainable short term response as related to federal COVID relief funds has made us aware that the States initial response to a Housing First model is a sustainable solution. Westbrook Housing has made a commitment to set aside units targeting the homeless population in all of its new affordable housing apartment buildings. However, not only is there a need for an increase in apartments, there is also a significant need for the supportive service model attached to the Housing First method of stabilizing the chronic homeless population who require a higher level of personal interaction and case management to permanently stabilize their lives through a stable housing environment

This bill will have a significant impact to increase the capacity of apartments with dedicated on-site supportive services to make a significant impact statewide. The infrastructure of organizations to develop and operate Housing First apartment complexes exists which will result in an immediate response to increase units with staffing support throughout the state.

In hope and preparation of the passing of LD, coordination has begun in southern Maine to deliver maximum units with maximum results utilizing the effective proven methods established in existing Housing First models in the metro Portland area. To be ready to utilize this existing infrastructure the following organizations have been coordinating our expertise to develop properties, provide housing subsidies, and deliver supportive services. Westbrook Housing Authority, Portland Housing Authority, South Portland Housing Authority, Avesta Housing, Preble Street Shelters Inc, and Community Housing of Maine have aligned ourselves to collaborate and cooperate to build, manage, provide services, and provide housing choice vouchers for rent subsidies so that this program can be implemented with maximum effect in the shortest amount of time.

Thank you for your support of LD2.