

# Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition



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## **Testimony in support of LD 2 to the Joint Committee on Housing**

April 4, 2023

Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and Members of the Joint Committee on Housing:

My name is Peter Lehman and I live in Thomaston. I am a formerly incarcerated citizen and a person in long-term recovery.\* I am testifying in favor of LD 2 on behalf of the Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition whose goal is to promote restorative practices in order to increase public safety and the health of our community.

Housing is a key element at both ends of our criminal legal system: housing issues are often a serious factor in leading women and men to jail and prison.

At the other end, those being released from our jails and face an enormous housing hurdle. Without adequate, safe housing we set them up for failure. And failure means additional criminality and additional victims.

As a regular volunteer at the Augusta Recovery Reentry Center, I see this every day. For me, these housing issues have names and faces as they struggle to get off this vicious merry-go-round—to get out of the cycle of homelessness, criminality, jail and prison.

It costs us \$78,000 per year to house someone at the Maine State Prison and almost as much to keep them in jail. Housing First is a MUCH cheaper alternative.

This legislation will help.

Please unanimously vote Ought to Pass on LD 2.

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\* In the interest of honesty and disclosure, a personal background statement is available on request.