

Maeve Merkle-Scotland  
Old Town  
Committee on Housing

Re: LD 2: An Act to Address Maine's Housing Crisis "An Act to End Chronic Homelessness by Creating the Housing First Fund"

Dear Teresa Pierce, Traci Gere, and Committee Staff,

My name is Maeve Merkle-Scotland. I am a current Social Work Student at the University of Maine, Orono and am an intern at a Youth Homeless Shelter. Through my work at the Shelter I have been exposed to the individual daily struggles, generational impacts, and detrimental effects homelessness has on the wellbeing of Maine's community overall. Life on the streets is unstable, dehumanizing, and exposes people to an unsafe environment that can be traumatizing.

I have seen firsthand minors who start using hard drugs to cope with hopelessness and a lack of consistency in life. Many youth have told me about freezing Maine winter nights where they slept on sidewalks with only a blanket with no place to go. Often these youth do not have family they can rely on, or have grown up unhoused. Numerous Maine residents who do not have their basic needs met is a sign something needs to change. Without a consistent place to sleep and eat, expecting any person to function in typical society or even maintain a job is unreasonable. Through the "Housing First Model", people will be provided with the largest barrier to homelessness as well as case management services to help transition into independent living. Working at a Shelter we have seen the success stories to "Housing First", and it works. With the state of Maine on board and a large-scale system putting resources in place, we can end homelessness and the detrimental lifestyle that follows it for many.

So as many know, Maine is in a housing crisis. A crisis is a time when a decision must be made, and voting 'yes' on LD 2 is a decision that would effectively move towards diffusing this crisis.

Sincerely,  
Maeve Merkle-Scotland