



## CITY OF BANGOR

### Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

#### Testimony in Support of LD 2 – “An Act to End Chronic Homelessness by Creating the Housing First Fund”

April XX, 2023

Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and distinguished members of the Housing Committee. My name is Debbie Laurie, Bangor City Manager, and I’m providing testimony on behalf of the Bangor City Council in support of LD 2, “An Act to End Chronic Homelessness by Creating the Housing First Fund.”

Chronic homelessness is a critical issue burdening Bangor and communities all across Maine. Service center communities in particular are faced with homeless encampments and other challenges brought on by those unable to secure shelter. These challenges are compounded by the fact that many lacking shelter are also struggling with severe substance use disorder and/or persistent, untreated mental illness.

Here in Bangor, with the help of technical assistance from HUD, we are beginning to make slow progress toward housing some of our chronically homeless residents. Unfortunately, securing housing using the Housing First model is just the first step in moving these individuals from homelessness to stability. For the vast majority of those who have experienced chronic homelessness, long lasting stability comes only with the provision of ongoing and often intensive supportive services. The current case management model that provides limited visits isn’t sufficient to support these high need individuals, and they often aren’t prepared to access community-based services.

Housing First is just as it sounds – the provision of housing prior to addressing other vital needs such as substance use and mental health treatment. While the approach works to move people into housing, it is less effective at keeping them there. Moving individuals into properties designed for those who have experienced chronic homelessness and then providing them with twenty four hour, on-site support is one of the missing pieces of the puzzle. LD 2 will allow for that level of support and significantly increase the chances individuals who have experienced chronic homelessness can transition to stable housing and make progress toward their personal and health goals.

LD 2 has added benefits for developers and landlords who build or manage properties intended for those who have experienced chronic homelessness. It is not unusual for properties inhabited by those coming from chronic homelessness to incur substantial damage. The provision of 24 hour, on-site support will significantly limit damage and make renting to this population a more feasible option for developers and landlords alike.

Chronic homelessness and its impact on our community is a problem we will continue to grapple with in the coming years. Although I believe we are making progress on the local level, we need assistance from the state to support our efforts and those of other communities across Maine. I strongly believe creating

a housing first fund is a good first step and, with the full support of the Bangor City Council, I urge you to pass LD 2 as a means to end chronic homelessness.

Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to reach out with questions.

Deborah Laurie, City Manager, [debbie.laurie@bangormaine.gov](mailto:debbie.laurie@bangormaine.gov)

Courtney O'Donnell, Assistant City Manager/ Director of Human Resources, [courtney.odonnell@bangormaine.gov](mailto:courtney.odonnell@bangormaine.gov)

Richard Fournier, City Council Chair, [richard.fournier@bangormaine.gov](mailto:richard.fournier@bangormaine.gov)