

Shay Dufour
South Portland
LD 1781

Senator Baldacci and Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Health and Human services committee,

My name is Shay Dufour, I reside in South Portland, and I am submitting my testimony in favor of LD 1781: An Act to Establish the Homeless Substance Use Disorder Program. I am a strong believer that supported programs such as the H.O.U.S.E program, are vital for Mainers dealing with homelessness, substance use disorders, and those struggling with traumatic events in their personal lives. I personally worked with the H.O.U.S.E pilot program, which is a collaboration of Preble Street and Greater Portland Health. The program reaches out mainly to the unsheltered individuals who deal with opioid use disorder, while also helping with mental health treatment and help finding housing.

I am a terrific example of how the H.O.U.S.E Program can and does work. Back in 2021, I was homeless, living on the streets of Portland, and struggling with opioid abuse and other substance. I was welcomed into the program, with the hope of becoming self-sufficient, independent and able to get housing. In the beginning of the program, I was put on suboxone to help with my opioid use, and also given a caseworker to guide me and help me through the struggles I faced on a daily basis. By the end of 2022, I am proud to say that I am free from all substances, I found my own apartment, and I am currently employed full-time. I'm a firm believer in saving the lives of so many that are dealing with the opioid crisis we have facing Maine right now. The number of fatalities due to fentanyl overdoses has skyrocketed over the past year. I've made it my personal mission to help those struggling with the same addiction that I had, by being involved in many recovery programs and being a strong advocate for the unhoused and those who are addicted to substances. I've also made a strong connection with my family again, and have become a better mother, daughter and wife.

LD 1781 will expand the initial pilot, and be available in rural and urban areas. It will also include other forms of substance use disorders, and provide funding for transportation and community and inpatient treatment services. We need to continue this program, in hopes that we will save lives and help those who struggle with homelessness, mental health, trauma, and substance use disorder. I humbly ask you are you take the fate of all Mainers' lives into consideration and urge you to pass LD 1781.

Thank you for your time today.

Sincerely,

Shay Dufour