

Testimony of Paul Schlosser, Disabled Veteran

Residence: Homeless, Portland

Supporting LD 1514: An Act to Provide, Short Term Housing to Individuals Recently Released from Correctional Facilities

Sponsored by Speaker Rachel Talbot Ross

I am aware that my friend and supporter, Jan Collins, gave you a brief idea on April 25th of some of the struggles I have recently had with housing, but I would like to provide you with my own personal experience.

I have not had an easy life, but I know that much of it has been by my own hand due to some of the mental health challenges and my substance use disorder. I entered the Army in 2003 at the age of 18. I served for one year and was honorably discharged in October of 2004 with several mental health diagnoses—PTSD, bipolar disorder and Tinnitus.

I have had several bad injuries, one following a jump off a roof and another following an attack by a gang in Portland who wanted to steal my watch. In the case of the gang attack, I was badly brain injured and was not expected to live. But I did live, though I now have trouble walking, have terrible back pain and trouble remembering things.

I have spent several terms in Maine State Prison, most recently from 2020 through April 14, 2023. During that time in prison, I attempted to get my life in order. I was able to contact the Veterans Administration and was promised a housing slot for homeless veterans. I was told I would be first on the list. But the day before I was released, I was told that I would not be eligible for the housing due to the robberies I had committed. Therefore, the day of release, I was simply given a ride to the city of Portland by the prison staff.

Fortunately, there I was met by a member of the Maine Prisoners Reentry Network. They have been trying to find me a place, but so far nothing has turned up. I have had to use my Veterans disability

payments to support a room in a motel. I am using the money I had hoped to have available to start a new life. I have no transportation, but my father tries to help me. I have not been able to get the health care I need. I have even thought about suicide. It would have meant so much to me if I had had a stable place to live even for a couple of months while I worked on some of the other problems I am facing.

Thank you for considering this way of helping people who are released from prison.