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United Way
of Southern Maine

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

My name is Taylor Cray, and I am the Advocacy Supervisor at Preble Street. I am here today to speak in support of LD 853: Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Establish a Right to Housing.

As you all know, Preble Street works to assist individuals who are struggling with homelessness, poverty, and food insecurity. We have been before you many times describing the nature of our work, with its inherent struggles and joys. As such, you know that we see firsthand the extreme challenges and difficulties of Maine's housing crisis. We have been before you throughout the past few years to discuss funding for Site-based Housing First, which provides 24/7, on-site support to individuals who struggle with fully independent living. You have seen us most recently alongside other low-barrier shelter providers, describing the extreme difficulty that low-barrier shelters statewide are currently facing due to the lack of sustainable, ongoing funding. You will see us this very day testifying in favor of two bills that assist with shelter funding, both low-barrier and otherwise. The necessity of this funding as a first step towards housing cannot be overstated, nor can its connection to the growing need for affordable housing for all.

Housing is instrumental in the safety and success of all individuals. Without access to consistent housing, nearly all other aspects of an individual's life struggle to find purchase, often leading to other challenges that make it more difficult to secure stable housing once again. Many of these difficulties can be avoided if we help those individuals in question remain in stable housing, without the looming threat of eviction and homelessness. A constitutional right to housing would help to ensure that more people remain housed, leaving fewer individuals to navigate the complex system of shelter and social services that often accompany homelessness.

While we do not yet know every facet of this bill, enshrining a right to housing within Maine's constitution signifies a statewide commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of all individuals residing in the state. This alone is something to strive for as we all seek to solve issues around housing affordability and availability in our state. I ask that you please vote in favor of this bill.

Thank you.

