

Written Testimony of Major General (Retired) Douglas A. Farnham
THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

LD 2217 “An Act to Strengthen the Maine Veterans’ Homes with Increased and Ongoing Funding”

February 27, 2024

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, I wish to submit my written statement in support of LD 2217.

I have testified before you in the past on the importance the Maine people put on service to the Country. Our state has one of the highest percentages per capita in the country of veterans in our population. Maine has also always been a leader in providing care to our veterans. The first VA hospital in the country was opened at Togus. The first VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in the country was opened in Caribou. The network of Maine Veterans’ Homes (MVH) delivers on our nation’s promise to veterans that we will stand by them, and these homes have been important to that effort by supporting our former service members, and their families, while ensuring they receive the appropriate care and dignity they deserve. Maine Veterans’ Homes have done this exceedingly well. They have received professional recognition for quality care and the recent Stakeholders Group has both lauded the quality of care and expressed the clear expectation the quality of care is a paramount requirement of Maine people for their Veterans.

I understand the DHHS position on this bill and support their efforts to strengthen all nursing homes that are struggling in Maine. However, I believe MVH has a unique relationship with the Legislature that is demonstrated by the passage of LD2001 in 2022.

Others will testify to the urgency and specifics of the financial need, but I urge you to support this bill. I have confidence that this Board of Trustees and CEO Sharon Fusco both understand and are committed to the challenges and expectations that have been placed on them. They are following through with the requirement of the Legislature to keep all the homes open and meet appropriate recommendations of the Stakeholders Group. For MVH to be successful the Legislature needs to do their part and provide the necessary funding to meet the unique needs of Maine Veterans’ Homes.

Thank you to all the members of this committee for your continued commitment to serving the Veterans of Maine.