

## **Testimony in Support of LD 244**

An Act to Provide Safe, Short-term Housing to Indigent Individuals Recently Released from Correctional Facilities

**Presented by Reentry Sisters**

**Public Hearing** 2-10-25, 1:00 pm

Good afternoon, Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, (Howzenfus) and the distinguished members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee. My name is Linda Small, and I am the Executive Director of Reentry Sisters, an organization dedicated to supporting currently and formerly incarcerated women, as they transition back into the community through education, career development, and empowerment. Today, I am here to express our strong support for LD 244.

Stable housing is the foundation of successful reentry. Yet, too many individuals leaving Maine's correctional facilities, particularly indigent individuals, face immediate homelessness upon release. Without a safe place to land, they are at higher risk of recidivism, economic instability, and disconnection from critical support services. LD 244 takes an essential step toward addressing this crisis by ensuring that individuals have access to short-term transitional housing during the most vulnerable period of their reentry.

For the women we work with at Reentry Sisters, the housing crisis is especially dire. Many face an impossible choice upon release—return to the abusive household that drove them into the system in the first place or face homelessness. This should never be a choice a woman has to make. Without a safe and stable option, their ability to heal, rebuild, and reintegrate is severely compromised. LD 244 acknowledges this reality and provides a critical safety net for those most in need.

We also strongly support the bill's directive for the Maine State Housing Authority to study long-term solutions for transitional housing. A two-month housing program is a crucial starting point, but we must also work toward sustainable housing models that integrate supportive services, employment pathways, and community-based resources.

We urge this committee to support LD 244 and ensure that every individual leaving incarceration has a fair chance at rebuilding their lives. Safe and stable housing is not just a need—it is a fundamental right and a cornerstone of successful reentry and public safety.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions.