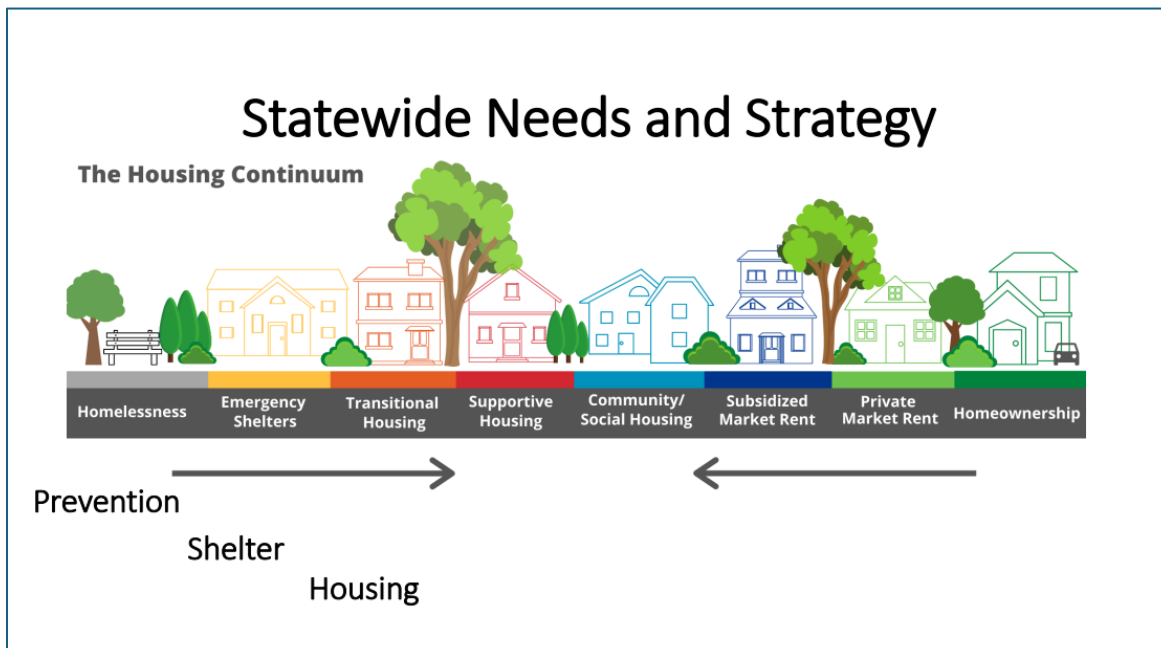


**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF LD 641  
AN ACT TO SUPPORT DIVERSION EFFORTS TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS IN MAINE**

**Tuesday, March 18, 2025**

**Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and the esteemed members of the Committee on Housing and Economic Development.** My name is Emily Flinkstrom and I am the director of Fair Tide, a nonprofit providing housing and supportive services to people experiencing homelessness. I am testifying on behalf of the York County Committee on Homelessness. Our Committee is comprised of representatives from 16 municipalities and community-based organizations from across York County.<sup>1</sup> We have come together to work collaboratively to address the issue of homelessness in our communities.

We strongly support LD 641, *An Act to Support Diversion Efforts to Address Homelessness in Maine*. Our organizations work closely together every day to address York County’s homelessness and affordable housing crises. We have found that to be successful, it is vitally important to address each part of the Housing Continuum – from prevention, to emergency shelter, to housing, and ultimately to homeownership. (For this reason, this Committee also strongly supports and submitted testimony on LD 698, *An Act to Sustain Emergency Homeless Shelters in Maine*.)



Preventing homelessness is a critical part of this Continuum, and the Housing Problem Solving (HPS) program is an extremely successful and cost-effective prevention strategy. HPS provides fast, targeted

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<sup>1</sup> Current members include representation from the municipalities of Biddeford, Eliot, Kennebunk, Kennebunkport, Kittery, Old Orchard Beach, Saco and Sanford, as well as the community-based organizations Caring Unlimited, Fair Tide, Sanford Housing Authority, Seeds of Hope, Southern Maine Agency on Aging, York Community Service Association, York County Community Action Corporation, York County Shelter Programs,

assistance to prevent homelessness before it starts. In 2024, 663 people were kept housed with a budget of just \$750,000.

Because housing is so scarce, once someone becomes homeless it is much more difficult to find housing. As a result, they end up in our system for much longer, which further increases the cost to support them. HPS costs just \$1,131 per client – a fraction of the cost to support someone once they become homeless. For example, Shelter beds cost \$36,000 per year per bed and Rapid Rehousing costs over \$7,000 per client.

LD 641 will double the investment in HPS, helping prevent homelessness for twice as many people — over 1,000 Mainers each year. That means fewer children are forced to change schools, fewer workers losing their jobs due to housing instability, and fewer families torn apart by avoidable crises. And investing a relatively small additional amount in this cost-effective prevention strategy will allow critical investments in emergency shelter, rapid re-housing and other homelessness intervention programs to be focused on those who need them most.

For these reasons, we urge you to support LD 641 and invest in a program that saves money, strengthens communities, and most importantly, keeps Mainers in their homes.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Emily F". The "F" is stylized with a long horizontal stroke.

Emily Flinkstrom  
Executive Director, Fair Tide  
Co-Founder, Mainspring

On behalf of the York County Committee on Homelessness:

*York County municipalities: Biddeford, Eliot, Kennebunk, Kennebunkport, Kittery, Old Orchard Beach, Saco and Sanford*

*York County community-based organizations: Caring Unlimited, Fair Tide, Sanford Housing Authority, Seeds of Hope, Southern Maine Agency on Aging, York Community Service Association, York County Community Action Corporation, York County Shelter Programs*