

## **Testimony of Maine Immigrant Rights' Coalition in Support of LD 641 -**

An Act to Support Diversion Efforts to Address Homelessness in Maine

Sponsor: Representative Malon

Public Hearing: March 18th, 2025 1:00 PM

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and Members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee,

My name is Ruben Torres, and I serve as the Advocacy, Communications, and Policy Manager for the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition (MIRC). We represent over 100 organizations working together to improve the social and economic well-being of Maine's immigrant communities. We are here today in support of LD 641, An Act to Support Diversion Efforts to Address Homelessness in Maine.

At MIRC, we have seen how housing insecurity affects Maine's communities, across the state, regardless of immigration status. Stable housing is the foundation upon which individuals and families build their lives—without it, securing employment, maintaining health, and ensuring children succeed in school become nearly impossible. Yet too many Mainers are just one emergency away from losing their homes.

LD 641 provides a practical, cost-effective solution to this crisis by expanding funding for the Housing Problem Solving (HPS) program. This program has already proven its effectiveness: with just \$750,000 in funding, HPS helped 663 people avoid homelessness in 2024. By doubling this investment to \$1.5 million, we could help prevent homelessness for over 1,300 Mainers—keeping families together, preserving jobs, and strengthening communities.

Prevention is not only the most compassionate approach, but it is also the most fiscally responsible. The cost of emergency shelter—\$36,000 per bed per year—is drastically higher than the \$1,131 per client that HPS requires. By investing in prevention, we can reduce strain on shelters, emergency services, and public health systems, ultimately saving the state money.

LD 641 is a commonsense, data-driven solution that will improve lives and make our communities stronger.

We urge this committee to support LD 641 and to prioritize long-term, sustainable solutions to Maine's housing crisis. Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Ruben Torres

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