

**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 Jace Farris. and I am a resident of Roque Bluffs, ME. I strongly support LD 641, *An Act to Support Diversion Efforts to Address Homelessness in Maine*, because preventing homelessness before it starts is not only the right thing to do - it's also the most cost-effective approach.

Homelessness is not just a policy issue. It's a deeply personal one. I have been working within the Homeless Response System for almost 6 years now. I have seen the benefits firsthand of how diversion can support someone experiencing homelessness. It is a wonderful thing to see how someone's morale can change after sleeping in a hotel room for one night after either sleeping on the ground or being crumpled in their vehicle sleeping. When they receive that morale boost it can be the difference between getting a job or not. Diversion can be the difference between being able to move into an apartment or not. It can mean getting a bus ticket to a different area where your family is located and moving out of homelessness. Diversion can help someone who has just had surgery sleep in a hotel for a few nights to recover so they do not get an infection. Diversion is not just a program it is life.

The Housing Problem Solving (HPS) program is a proven solution. In 2024, HPS helped 663 people stay housed with a budget of just \$750,000 – that's only \$1,131 per person. Compare that to the alternative: \$36,000 per year for a shelter bed or over \$7,000 for rapid rehousing. Every dollar invested in HPS saves taxpayers money while protecting individuals and families from homelessness.

With the additional funding proposed in LD 641, HPS could 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.

I 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,
Jace Farris
Roque Bluffs, Maine