



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002

(207) 287-1400

TTY: Maine Relay 711

Holly Rae Eaton

P.O. Box 277

Deer Isle, ME 04627

Phone: (207) 610-9281

Holly.Eaton@legislature.maine.gov

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Testimony of Representative Holly Eaton

LD 748 — An Act to Increase Bridging Rental Assistance Program Housing Voucher Funding to Reduce the Current Partial Waiting List and Increase Housing Vouchers for Persons Living with Mental Health Challenges

Submitted to the Housing and Economic Development Committee

Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee, my name is Representative Holly Eaton, and I proudly represent House District 15, which includes Deer Isle, Stonington, Brooklin, Tremont, Southwest Harbor, Frenchboro, Swan's Island, Isle au Haut, and Vinalhaven. I respectfully submit this written testimony in strong support of **LD 748**, sponsored by Representative Golek of Harpswell.

This bill provides essential ongoing funding for the Bridging Rental Assistance Program (BRAP) to reduce the partial waiting list and increase the number of vouchers available to individuals living with mental health challenges. As housing instability continues to be one of the greatest obstacles to long-term recovery and stability, this investment is both necessary and urgent.

In my district, particularly in our rural and island communities, access to affordable and stable housing is already limited. For individuals experiencing mental health challenges, that barrier is often insurmountable without assistance. Programs like BRAP make it possible for people to stabilize, seek treatment, and move forward—but only if the resources are there to support them.

LD 748 addresses increased program costs stemming from a 2021 policy change, and the proposed \$660,000 annual General Fund appropriation beginning in FY 2025-26 is a measured and responsible step toward meeting the real and growing demand. This funding will make a meaningful difference in the lives of Mainers across the state.

Thank you for your consideration of this important bill and for your continued commitment to addressing the housing and mental health needs of our communities. Thank you.

District 15: Brooklin, Deer Isle, Eagle Island Township, Frenchboro, Southwest Harbor, Stonington, Swan's Island, Tremont, Isle au Haut, Vinalhaven