

March 25, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Curry, Representative Gere and Members of the Housing and Economic Committee:

My name is Victoria McCarty and I am a resident of Augusta. I am submitting written testimony in strong support of this vital bill, 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.”**

**LD 748’s** purpose is to boost housing support for individuals facing mental health challenges by increasing funding for the Bridging Rental Assistance Program (BRAP) in the form of an annual allocation of \$660,000 to BRAP to reduce the current partial waiting list, ensuring timely access to housing assistance for those in need. By boosting increased funding, the program can sustain more housing vouchers, which would benefit individuals living with mental health challenges and allow for stable living conditions. Stable housing is crucial for mental health recovery and well-being. Increasing BRAP funding allows for Maine's commitment to supporting residents with mental health challenges to continue

In 2021 a state policy adjustment increased the portion of rent covered by BRAP, leading to higher program costs. This bill addresses those added expenses, making sure the program will continue in these times of uncertainty.

Providing stable housing can and does significantly allow for reducing expensive emergency healthcare costs and reliance on other state services, leading to long-term economic benefits for the community. By supporting LD 748, Maine can take a much-needed step toward assuring that individuals with mental health challenges have a path to stable housing, fostering a healthier and more inclusive community. This also gives an Individual needing stable housing, opportunities to make meaningful contributions to a community of their choice.

In closing I would like to share that I experienced homelessness many years ago. If the BRAP program had been available at the time, I might have been able to make some better life choices starting out as a young person who faced a number of mental health challenges. So please, I urge you to support those who need this vital program by voting **Ought to pass** on LD 748.

Thank you for considering my testimony. The work you do for those of us in the mental health peer community is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

*Victoria McCarty*

Augusta

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