

## **Testimony in Support of LD 641, “An Act to Support Diversion Efforts to Address Homelessness in Maine”**

Good afternoon Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and the esteemed members of the Committee on Housing and Economic Development. My name is Emily Richards and I am the Hub Coordinator specifically overseeing the Hub 5 which covers Franklin & Oxford County as well as Livermore and Livermore Falls within Maine's Homeless Response System. Today, I stand before you to express our strong support for LD 641, "An Act to Support Diversion Efforts to Address Homelessness in Maine," sponsored by Representative Marc Malon, which seeks to allocate critical funding to the Housing Problem Solving Program.

As echoed in previous testimonies, our current homelessness prevention programs, like the Housing Problem Solving (HPS) Program, have demonstrated commendable success in cost-effectiveness and early intervention. In 2024 alone, HPS completed 663 interventions, with 66% of those served (437 individuals) receiving assistance before becoming homeless. Financial assistance was required in 73% of cases (483 individuals), and 78% (519 individuals) had their housing issue successfully resolved. The total budget for HPS was \$750,000, meaning it operated at a cost of just \$1,131.22 per client served and \$1,445.09 per successful resolution. In comparison, the Temporary Rapid Rehousing Program (TRRP) cost over \$7,000 per client and over \$10,000 per resolution in 2023, while emergency shelters cost approximately \$36,000 per bed annually.

In Hub 5, over the past year, we recorded an inflow of 121 individuals and families entering our homelessness response system, compared to an outflow of only 74. Of those who exited, 42 were successfully diverted or transitioned into stable housing. Unfortunately, some individuals included in the outflow total were incarcerated or lost contact with our system, leaving us with no way to track their status.

This imbalance underscores the growing demand for services and the strain on our already overloaded system. With proper funding, we could divert more individuals from homelessness and better serve those currently in our system. These trends reflect a broader statewide challenge, highlighting the urgent need for increased resources and support.

With the proposed funding from LD 641, our hub could significantly amplify our intervention strategies. Specifically, additional funds would allow us to:

- Increase the number of case managers and trained specialists to handle the rising case load.
- Extend more substantial direct client assistance for urgent housing needs.
- Implement targeted outreach programs to identify and assist at-risk populations before they lose their housing.
- Save the system in general more funds by preventing someone from entering the system.
- Prevent trauma inflicted on the client that will affect their ability to be housed in the future.

The data from our hubs across the state clearly illustrate the need for a robust funding increase as proposed by LD 641. This bill is not merely a funding mechanism; it's a lifeline that will empower us to 'stop the bleeding' in our communities and create a more sustainable framework for preventing homelessness.

I urge you to support LD 641, to strengthen our capacity to combat homelessness effectively and compassionately across Maine.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, I am happy to answer any questions you might have.