

May 5, 2025

Good morning, Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and members of the State and Local Government Committee and thank you for the opportunity to provide my written testimony today.

My name is Lisa Franklin, and I am here to express my strong support for LD 1566. If passed, this bill would compensate people with lived experience (PWLE) who serve on advisory boards for their invaluable contributions to policy development, program design, and service delivery.

I, myself, am a PWLE. I was homeless for the entirety of 2020. I strongly believe that myself, as well as thousands of others, bring firsthand insights that cannot be replicated by data alone. Our perspectives help organizations and institutions understand the real-world impacts of decisions, making services more effective, equitable, and person-centered. Yet far too often, PWLE are invited to share our stories or provide expertise without fair compensation.

This practice is both ethically and practically flawed. Expecting unpaid labor reinforces power imbalances and perpetuates the very inequities that many of us have fought so fiercely to overcome. It also risks limiting participation from only those who can afford to volunteer their time—excluding voices from marginalized communities and diluting the diversity of input.

Compensating PWLE is not charity—it is justice. It acknowledges our time, expertise, and emotional labor. It validates our role as essential partners in shaping better systems.

Speaking from personal experience, I am an advocate for Homeless Voices for Justice. I became involved with this advocacy organization approximately 9 months after I was housed. I do receive a \$50 per week stipend for my participation. Although, I didn't realize at first that I would be financially compensated for my lived experience, I was very pleasantly surprised! It's not just about the money itself, it's about the feeling that my experience MATTERS.

I urge this body to support policies and funding structures that ensure PWLE are recognized not only with words, but with wages. Our contributions are quite frankly priceless. And we deserve to be paid for them.

Thank you.

Lisa Franklin
Resident of Portland