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Supplemental Testimony of Representative Sophie Warren
**L.D. 1946, An Act to Clarify the Eligibility of Certified Recovery Residences
for Bridging Rental Assistance Program Housing Vouchers**
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Sponsor Amendment

To begin, I want to share brief comments regarding the intent of the Sponsor Amendment to this bill. The need for this amendment, brought to our attention by the Department, clarifies that residents in Recovery Residences can apply for BRAP, not that Recovery Residences can accept BRAP. This is consistent with the intent of this bill and this amendment is supported by advocates who helped me to bring this bill forward.

Q&A

Per discussion during the public hearing, I have responded in writing to the following questions asked of me by two members of the committee to prepare for the work session:

1. How long is the current BRAP waitlist?

"In February 2024, BRAP instituted a partial waitlist, awarding resources to Priority 1 and 2 populations and putting Priority 3 applicants on a waitlist. The waitlist has grown to 148 individuals in the 12 months since" ([Director Squirrell Testimony](#) on Rep. Golek's bill on BRAP - March 2025).

2. How many new people would potentially be added to the BRAP waitlist if LD 1946 passes?

According to MARR, there are currently 1,235 beds statewide in Maine's 100 certified recovery residences. One of the requirements for BRAP eligibility is a primary diagnosis of certain primary DSM 5 diagnosis's or DSM 4 equivalents. As one example, the prevalence of schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder among individuals with substance use disorders (SUDs) varies across studies, but estimates generally range from 5% to 10%. This rate is notably higher than the approximately 1% prevalence of schizophrenia in the general population:

- 5% of 1235 = 62 people potentially added to the waitlist.
- 10% of 1235 = 123 people potentially added to the waitlist.

However, there are other criteria for BRAP eligibility that would have to be met (i.e. currently receives SSI/SSDI benefits, or have applied for benefits, or has applied for a Section 8 Housing Voucher, or is currently on the waitlist) by the applicant. So even estimates of 62 on the low end and 123 on the high end are overestimates of the number of people that could be added.

As further response to these questions, I want to address why we should allow residents in recovery housing to be eligible for BRAP housing vouchers if there is a waitlist *currently* and this would increase it:

Recovery residences are, by design, transitional housing—a category explicitly recognized under both the BRAP and HUD definitions of homelessness. Dept. predicts as small number of residents in recovery residences will meet BRAP’s eligibility criteria:

- Serious Mental Illness
 - Dr. Squirrell’s testimony on why this will not add many people to the BRAP waitlist. “Diagnosis also impacts eligibility. BRAP requires a Section 17 mental health diagnosis, and though it is not uncommon for recovery residences to serve individuals with co-occurring diagnoses, it is necessary to inform the Committee of this as **many residents may only have an SUD diagnosis**, resulting in a presumably large portion of the population the bill intends to serve ineligible for what it strives to achieve.”
 - Receive or are applying for SSI/SSDI or other income supports, and
 - Have sought HUD Section 8 assistance
2. Individuals in recovery residences may fall within BRAP’s priority groups, especially those recently discharged from institutions such as hospitals or correctional facilities.

Denying BRAP access based solely on their residence in a recovery home ignores the fact that such settings meet the federal and state definitions of homelessness and serve as a critical step on the path to permanent housing.

BRAP Program Eligibility

BRAP Manual establishes **3 criteria for program eligibility** for Local Administrative Agency to assess

1. Individuals must have Serious Mental Illness and meet criteria for Section 17 services;
2. Individuals must be in some state of receipt/application/appeal for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Social Security Disability Income (SSDI); other income source (TANF, Employment, etc.), or documentation of General Assistance (GA); and
3. Have completed and submitted applications for HUD Section 8 rental assistance.

BRAP Priority Groups

The BRAP manual goes further to individual indicate that funds will be released for individuals based on a priority basis, with **three priorities groups** identified:

1. Individuals being, or recently, discharged from a psychiatric hospital after a stay of greater than 72 hours.
2. Adults being discharged from a Correctional Facility within 30 days, or who have been discharged from a Correctional Facility within 30 days, or adults who have been adjudicated through a Mental Health Treatment Court
3. **Adults who meet the HUD definition of “Literally Homeless”**

Literally Homeless is one of the four categories of homelessness as defined in the [Homeless Definition](#):

Literally Homeless is defined as:

Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:

1. Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation; or
2. **Is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements** (including congregate shelters, **transitional housing**, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state and local government programs); or
3. Is exiting an institution where (s)he has resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution.

BRAP Definition of Homeless (BRAP Manual R:5.2024)

Homeless: A person is considered homeless if he/she is characterized by one of the following:

- Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:
 - i. has a primary residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation;
 - ii. **is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements; or**
 - iii. is exiting an institution where (s)he has resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution.
- graduating from transitional housing specifically for homeless persons

HUD Definition of Homeless - [HEARTH Act, effective Jan. 4, 2012](#)

Homeless. An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:

- i. An individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;
- ii. An individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals); or
- iii. An individual who is exiting an institution where he or she resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution