

Hello Chair Baldacci, Chair Meyer, and honorable members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Joe Oviatt, and I am a resident of Gorham, Maine. I am speaking as a person with lived experience that was helped by the HOUSE program through Preble Street and Greater Portland Health. I am here today to ask that you vote in favor of LD 1781: An Act to Establish the Homeless Substance Use Disorder Service Program.

Before I got into the H.O.U.S.E. program, I was staying at Oxford Street Shelter, and I felt lost and without any support. I felt like I was always going to be there and nothing good was going to happen again. I felt like I was drowning, and I couldn't stop using. It was a vicious cycle that always led to the same place. I don't have any family to support me, and there was no support coming from the shelter.

The H.O.U.S.E. program set me up with case management that made me feel like I had somebody in my corner. First, they helped me by getting me the basic things that I needed, like clothing, food, and a cell phone. I made really good connections with staff at Greater Portland Health and Preble Street. These connections helped me feel like I wasn't alone anymore. It's really scary being out there alone and not having a clue what to do. It wasn't that I didn't want to do something, it was that I didn't know what to do or how to do it.

The H.O.U.S.E. program helped me get into different treatment programs, helped me look for housing, and helped me move forward with my life, even when I made mistakes. We finally found a good recovery house that fits my needs and I feel like I belong there. I am currently working and have a means of supporting myself. My goal all along has been to get myself to a place where I am self-sufficient, and the H.O.U.S.E. program has helped me move toward that goal.

Thank you for your time and consideration today, I urge you to vote in support of LD 1781.

Sincerely,

Joe Oviatt