

May 12, 2023

Special Select Committee on Housing
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

LD 1721, An Act to Create Transitional Housing Communities for Homeless Populations in the State

Dear Sen. Pierce, Rep. Gere, and Committee members,

Please accept this letter as the testimony of the Metro Regional Coalition (MRC) which voted unanimously this week to support LD 1721, *An Act to Create Transitional Housing Communities for Homeless Populations in the State*.

The MRC is a longstanding collaboration between the cities of Portland, South Portland, and Westbrook, and the towns of Cape Elizabeth, Falmouth, Gorham, and Scarborough, staffed by the Greater Portland Council of Governments. The MRC focuses its work on issues impacting Greater Portland, from housing and homelessness to municipal and regional partnerships wherever possible.

MRC's municipal leaders see firsthand how the unmet needs of unhoused people are overwhelming our municipal and volunteer systems. Our staffs and volunteers, alongside nonprofits partners, are all heroically working unsustainable hours, and our property taxes are rising under the weight of the costs we are asked to take on, largely through the General Assistance program. And yet the crisis of unhoused people continues to grow. We cannot continue this way – change is urgently needed.

LD 1721 offers the legislature an opportunity to craft a better system. By funding the construction and operation of regionally distributed permanent transitional housing facilities, this bill creates a framework for humanely and appropriately managing the increasing number of unhoused people in a sustainable manner. We owe it to the unhoused, and to our communities, to do better.

Without a change in policy, we will see increasing numbers of people with nowhere to live. Our shelters are full, and emergency options are exhausted. We need your help.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our support for LD 1721, and please let us know if we can provide anything more to assist your work on this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Michael Foley
Chair, Metro Regional Coalition
Mayor, City of Westbrook