

**Testimony Against LD #853:
RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Establish a
Right to Housing**

Dear Respected Members of the Housing Committee,

My name is Dr. Liesha Petrovich, a resident of Pittston, and I am here to urge you to reject LD 853.

My daughter is in active fentanyl addiction and has spent the last two years on the street. She has lived in Portland's biggest encampments. The only reason she is currently off the street is because Mayor Mark Dion's last sweep forced people into shelters. It's the only reason she's not sleeping outside in the cold.

When I was asked to testify on this bill, I'm sure they thought I would be a supporter. Why wouldn't I want my child to have housing? Why wouldn't I want All individuals to have a natural, inherent, and unalienable right to housing?

Because I used to be a proud Maine progressive. Until progressive policies kept me from getting the help that my child so desperately needs. Now I'll no longer stand with any party.

While people are being burned to death by propane fires in the encampment, when crime is running rampant throughout every Maine city where encampments exist, and where countless have died from fentanyl, this committee is wasting time on a bill that is absolute political theatre.

When I called and asked how this could help my daughter the response was "We don't know." It was "There could be legal battles about this, so we're not sure"

With the incredibly limited time you have to help Mainers, you are focusing on political theatre meant to do what? Be a good talking point in some political circles? Maybe raise some money?

I have no idea. What I do know is this does nothing to help the substance-use-disorder-related homelessness that is impacting so many communities in Maine. It does nothing to help the unhoused find long-term solutions through their incredibly complex situation. It does nothing to help families like mine, even though we've been begging for help for years.

I've emailed, called, and tried to speak to so many politicians. From the top of the ticket to the bottom, I've begged for help. Real, substantial help. Because the current policies don't

work and you all know they don't work because the encampments keep growing and fentanyl is the number one reason that American adults aged 18-45 are dying.

Instead, this legislature has overlooked encampments and tried to legalize fentanyl. Only two Maine politicians have spoken to me, Senators Hickman and Bennett. The rest have ignored me. They don't return phone calls. I'm just a "junkies" mom, so I'm quite used to it.

But here's the infuriating thing. There are solutions that work.

Since 2010, the number of veterans experiencing homelessness has dropped by 55.3 percent, with an 11 percent decrease from 2020 to 2022.

This is because we made a conscious choice to make veteran-related homelessness a priority. We can do the same with SUD-related homelessness.

If we could find anyone with the courage and conviction to actually do something. This political theatre is just that. It's a distraction that takes away precious time and attention from the real problems facing Mainers.

How many more people have to be burned to death from a propane fire? How many will die of exposure? How many will simply give up because they have no clear path toward finding a home before you make it a priority?

To say that I'm disgusted by my former party's political theatre is an understatement. There are real solutions and there are real lives at stake. One more time I'm begging you to do something real and stop whatever this is.

Simply put, how long before any of you have the courage and conviction to actually help me and the countless Maine families just like mine?