



MAINE VETERANS' HOMES

caring for those who served

An independent nonprofit organization serving Maine's Veterans and families

Written Statement

For

LD 2217 - "An Act to Strengthen the Maine Veterans' Homes with Increased and Ongoing Funding."

February 27, 2024

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and other distinguished members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee; my name is Don Lagace, and I wish to submit my written statement in support of L.D. 2217, "*An Act to Strengthen the Maine Veterans' Homes with Increased and Ongoing Funding.*"

I am the Chair of the Maine Veterans' Homes (MVH) Board of Trustees. I retired in December 2020 as a Brigadier General after almost 39 years of military service in the Maine Army National Guard. I am honored and privileged to serve on the MVH Board with an incredible group of veterans and business community leaders.

Sustainable funding with LD 2217 at \$3.1MM of state funds when combined with \$765K in the Governor's budget and matched with \$7.9MM in federal funds closes a \$11.7MM gap that is critical in keeping MVH's system of care viable in the state of Maine.

In the last twelve months MVH leadership has developed and implemented a roadmap of cost optimization levers including stabilized staffing, increased revenue and census, and numerous other cost reduction initiatives. Additionally, MVH leadership and the Board spent the better part of this past Fall developing an understanding of current operational challenges and opportunities to establish the framework for a Strategic Plan which culminated in a two-day Board Strategic Planning meeting in January 2024.

Simply put, if the Legislature does not close the \$11.7M funding gap with \$3.1MM of additional State funds through LD 2217 to ensure sustainable funding, the Board will be forced to examine options as we anticipate completely exhausting remaining investments within 30-36 months.

No one is more committed to, vested in, or capable of serving Maine's veterans and preserving MVH's future than the Board of Trustees and the dedicated leaders and employees of our organization. Once passed, LD 2217 will preserve a system of care that honors the commitment made to those who offered everything to protect our freedoms through their service to this country. It's a small price to pay to honor our Veterans and enable MVH to continue its legacy as one of the premier long-term care systems in the Nation for quality, innovation, and service. Maine's Veterans deserve nothing less!

We truly appreciate the support from Senate President Jackson and the many Co-Sponsors including Speaker Ross, Senator Hickman, and Representative Supica, and others from this Committee and the Maine's Legislature.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

DONALD O. LAGACE JR.
Brigadier General, USA Retired
Chairperson, MVH Board of Trustees