



Rachel Talbot Ross
Senator, District 28

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Testimony of Senator Rachel Talbot Ross introducing
**LD 244, “An Act to Provide Safe, Short-term Housing to Indigent Individuals
Recently Released from Correctional Facilities”**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
February 10, 2025*

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety,

My name is Senator Rachel Talbot Ross. I represent Senate District 28, which includes part of Portland and Peaks Island. I am here today to introduce LD 244, *An Act to Provide Safe, Short-term Housing to Indigent Individuals Recently Released from Correctional Facilities*.

This bill is about transitional housing relief. Research and real-world experience show that stable housing is the most critical factor in successful reentry after incarceration. Without it, people leaving correctional facilities are far more likely to experience homelessness, struggle to find employment and cycle back into the criminal justice system. If we want people to succeed after release, we need to ensure they have the basic security of a place to live.

As currently written, LD 244 creates a transitional housing program and fund administered by the Department of Corrections (DOC) in collaboration with the Maine State Housing Authority to provide up to two months of transitional housing assistance to indigent individuals leaving incarceration.

However, after some recent discussions with stakeholders, I would ask this committee to consider a few ways this bill can and should be strengthened to better meet the needs of reentering individuals and align with what we know works.

I ask the committee to consider the following changes to the bill:

- **Expand eligibility** by removing the requirement that only indigent individuals qualify. Anyone leaving incarceration should have access to this program, as housing insecurity affects a broad range of people.
- **Extend housing support from two months to six months**, aligning with other DOC residential programs and providing a more realistic timeline for people to find stability.
- **Shift the role of the Department of Corrections** so that the department will not act as a landlord but will instead administer a transitional housing fund that individuals can apply to for assistance. Housing would be secured through private landlords, nonprofit organizations, or other housing providers that meet the program’s safety and quality standards.



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- **Make this a two-year pilot program**, rather than commissioning a separate study. The DOC will collect data throughout the pilot to determine long-term need, including how long individuals require housing support, the effect on recidivism, and other key outcomes.
- **Fund the program with a one-time allocation of \$250,000** to support 10 individuals every six months, 20 per year, and 40 over the biennium, with each participant eligible for up to \$1,000 per month for housing. This includes \$5,000 per year for administrative costs to oversee the program.

These adjustments will ensure that this program truly meets the needs of those reentering our communities. The first weeks and months after release are critical. Housing is the foundation for successful reentry, and without it, people struggle to secure employment, access healthcare, and reintegrate into their communities. By providing meaningful transitional housing assistance, we can increase stability, reduce recidivism, and ease the burden on our criminal justice system.

I urge the committee to support these changes and move forward with a bill that gives people a fair chance at success after incarceration.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachel Talbot Ross".

Rachel Talbot Ross
State Senator, District 28
Representing part of Portland and Peaks Island