

Members of the committee, thank you for hearing us today. My name is Brian Kresge. I am former (and probably again soon treasurer) of the Sisters in Arms Center. I am director of software engineering for a national healthcare provider. I have been president of Maine's oldest synagogue, Beth Israel in Bangor for the past 6 years. I am also presently a rabbinical student, receiving ordination in 2026, and part of my pastoral care portfolio will be trauma-focused care.

But the key reason why this is so important to me is because I am a recently retired soldier. I enlisted in 1994 and served as an active-duty paratrooper. After 5 years on active duty, I served in the Pennsylvania and Maine Army National Guard, with breaks in service for college and my MBA. I served 3 years overseas, my last mobilization for OIF in 2008-2009. I finally retired in October of last year. Looking back over the past 30 years, I know too many soldiers and veterans, male, female, and trans, who have known the crushing cycle of MST, poverty, and homelessness.

LD 662 offers a very modest lift to an organization dedicated to serving a chronically underserved veteran population. My peers will better speak to the statistics demonstrating that need.

I place a lot of value on what the Sisters in Arms Center is doing, not just as treasurer, but when I was still a drilling member of the Guard. One of our soldiers in the 286th CSSB in Bangor, who is a survivor of military sexual assault, was couch-surfing without a house and at risk. I put the unit in touch with Rebecca, and we were able to house this soldier. And it's important to note this isn't the first time an active, drilling member of the Maine National Guard has been a resident at the Center. Sadly, it won't be the last.

I would call our budget responsible and stable. We have successfully fund-raised for 11 years now. We keep the lights on and the house together. We're able to keep families intact while providing them stability in transition. Almost all of them experienced MST during their service.

Across the years, our grant income has remained mostly steady. Our program revenue is also steady state. What we can be most proud of is the fundraising apparatus we've built. Between corporate donors, VA Affiliates, non-profits, and generous individuals, we have, in one fiscal year, doubled our donation revenue. That enables some part-time services and better upkeep of the home, not to mention a buffer for inflation. What we cannot do near-term, even as an organization over a decade in service, is go beyond housing and into the levels counseling services.

With this commitment from the state, we could also provide on-site counseling services focusing on trauma. We can offer more supervision in the house. Speaking from the

capacity of former treasurer, between VSOs and our demonstrated ability to fundraise as far and wide as Upstate New York, I believe we have a mature and sustainable model that will let us be a partner in better serving our woman veterans. The more we can offer beyond just housing, the more we can tap into in terms of grants and funds, which I promise this committee we will pursue. I would urge this committee to see this relatively small apportionment as planting a seed that will grow into something meaningful for this underserved group of veterans in Maine. The value we will provide to these heroes and the state will far exceed the investment this legislature should make in our operations.

Thank you so much.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Kresge, MBA
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