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Testimony of Rep. Marc Malon introducing
**LD 641, An Act to Support Diversion Efforts to Address Homelessness in
Maine**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development

Senator Curry, Representative Gere and esteemed colleagues on the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development, I am Marc Malon, and I represent House District 133, which is part of the great City of Biddeford. I am here today to present **LD 641, An Act to Support Diversion Efforts to Address Homelessness in Maine**.

The need for this bill was communicated to me by folks from the United Way, who, along with other organizations, are working hard to prevent and reduce homelessness. One program that has shown real, concrete results is the **Housing Problem Solving Program** at Maine Housing. This innovative program provides fast, targeted assistance to individuals facing imminent crises to help prevent them from becoming unhoused in the first place.

Let's cut to the chase: LD 641 proposes a one-time infusion of \$750,000 into the Housing Problem Solving Program.

The individuals on the ground providing these services can explain the nuts and bolts of the program better than I can, but what I can say from a 10,000-foot view is that the program provides agencies with the tools to help protect clients from homelessness in several ways, through actions like housing payment assistance, utility assistance, covering rental application fees and moving costs, as well as some transportation needs – and much more.

These types of targeted assistance are far cheaper and easier than the assistance needed to address homelessness after it occurs. The instability which follows after becoming unhoused is immense and expensive for all involved. It is estimated that a budget of \$750,000 kept 663 people housed in 2024.

Obviously, we need to provide whatever support we can to our emergency shelters and rapid rehousing programs, but this measure does not compete against programs. This measure will help relieve some of the pressure so that those programs can better assist individuals who are in need.

Housing Problem Solving operates at a fraction of the cost of emergency shelter and rapid rehousing, costing \$1,131 per client. By supporting this program, we are supporting vital interventions that ultimately save taxpayer money in the long run. This one-time infusion of funds will enable our folks on

the ground to help more individuals over the next year and make a larger dent in the homelessness crisis. This is money well-spent, and I believe we can make a strong case to our colleagues on the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee for why it is worth supporting.

I urge you to support this vital measure and am happy to answer any questions. Thank you for your time and consideration.