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United Way  
of Southern Maine



Good afternoon, Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and members of the Committee on Housing and Economic Development,

My name is Annika Moore, and I am the Advocacy Team Leader at Preble Street. Preble Street's mission is to provide accessible, barrier-free services to empower people experiencing problems with homelessness, housing, hunger, and poverty and advocate for solutions to these problems.

I am here today to strongly support LD 641, An Act to Support Diversion Efforts to Address Homelessness in Maine. This bill provides cost-effective support to Mainers experiencing housing instability through funding for Housing Problem Solving. In 2024, this fund kept 663 people across the state housed with a budget of just \$750,000.

Preble Street's Rapid Re-Housing Team uses Housing Problem Solving funds to directly support community members at imminent risk of homelessness. In 2024, the Rapid Re-Housing Team at Preble Street received \$30,000 from this program, which they used to support 19 households (33 individuals) in staying housed. One client contacted our team after receiving a notice to quit for nonpayment of rent. His wife had undergone emergency surgery and, therefore, she had been unable to work for multiple months. The family received Housing Problem Solving funding for three months of rent, which allowed the couple and their three elementary-aged kids to remain stably housed while the client's wife recovered, with a plan to return to work.

Historically, the Rapid Re-Housing team exhausts the funding awarded within the first part of the year since the identified need for brief financial support is so high. This bill doubles the funding for Housing Problem Solving and would, therefore, allow our Rapid Re-Housing team to support more households in staying housed, including those who contact our team later in the year.

In addition to financial support, clients Preble Street serve through the Housing Problem Solving fund receive brief and intense housing counseling. The goal of these conversations is to connect households with resources and to plan for stability moving forward. This aspect of the program was critical for another client who worked with our team. This client contacted our team seeking support with rental arrears, as he owed a total of \$5,000 and was facing eviction. Housing Problem Solving funding was able to support this renter with three months of arrears, and the client's landlord agreed to a payment plan because of the advocacy efforts of the caseworker. Today, this client remains stably housed.

Many Mainers are just one car repair or medical bill away from homelessness, and Housing Problem Solving provides a low-cost intervention to families facing a financial emergency. When individuals and families avoid homelessness, they are able to stay in their communities—children continue to attend school, workers retain their employment, and families remain together.

Thank you for your time and consideration.