

March 25, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Curry, Representative Gere and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development. My name is Kerri Pitts, I am a resident of Augusta, and I am here today to testify **in favor of LD 748**.

Maine's commitment to vulnerable populations has always been a point of pride for me as a Mainer. This is a perfect example of where we need to step in and take care of those in need. While the housing crisis in Maine feels overwhelmingly impossible to overcome, we *can* focus on furthering opportunities for at least one population at a time. The recent news regarding BRAP moving to a full waitlist is incredibly disheartening and proves the need for this bill more than ever.

Studies have demonstrated that approximately 25% - 30% of individuals affected by homelessness have a serious mental illness (SMI). The reality of that statistic may be much higher, given the challenges of gathering statistics from this population. As an advocate in every aspect of my life, (professional, personal and academically), I have seen, first-hand, the impacts of homelessness on those living with serious mental illness. The issues experienced during the chaos of being unhoused commonly exacerbate symptoms of the hardships that come along with mental health challenges. For individuals living with mental illness, **housing is health care**.

Working in mental health policy advocacy, I absolutely understand the barriers that currently come along with funding in this state. However, certain emergent situations require immediate action, and given the current state of BRAP, we are there, now.

This waitlist is not just a bureaucratic issue—it has profound **human and financial costs**. When people remain stuck in high-cost institutional settings **not because they need clinical care, but because they have nowhere else to go**, the state is forced to spend significantly more per person than it would if those individuals had access to rental assistance and community-based supports.

If we can't protect the most vulnerable and marginalized groups of Mainers, can we protect any at all?

Please consider the impacts of this funding for our fellow Mainers who are struggling with disproportionately discriminatory experiences when attempting to secure stable and safe housing.

Thank you for your time and consideration and I urge you to vote **Ought to Pass on LD 748**.

Kerri Pitts
Augusta

References:

[The Complexities of Serious Mental Illness & Homelessness](#)