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President of the Senate

THE MAINE SENATE
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***Testimony of Senate President Mattie Daughtry presenting
LD 1287, An Act to Support Workforce Development by Establishing the Housing Stability
Fund
Before the Housing and Economic Development Committee***

Good morning, Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and esteemed members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee. My name is Mattie Daughtry, and I am proud to serve as the President of the Maine State Senate, representing District 23, which includes Brunswick, Freeport, Harpswell, Pownal, Chebeague Island, and part of Yarmouth. I am grateful for the opportunity to present to you today, LD 1287, "An Act to Support Workforce Development by Establishing the Housing Stability Fund."

Maine is currently grappling with an acute labor shortage, significantly exacerbated by our state's ongoing housing crisis. The dual issues of workforce and housing instability are deeply interconnected, and the statistics paint a concerning picture. According to the Maine Development Foundation, approximately 26,000 individuals left Maine's labor force during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020¹. Although we have made strides toward recovery, the long-term trends remain troubling. The decline of working-age residents is compounded by an alarming number of young people choosing to delay their entrance into the workforce in order to pursue further education and training.

This bill establishes the Housing Stability Support Program and the Housing Stability Fund within the Maine State Housing Authority. The administration of this program would be delegated by MaineHousing to one or more qualified entities. That could include a Community Action Agency, a municipal housing authority, or other appropriate organization identified by MaineHousing. The program provides rental assistance paid directly to landlords for tenants with household incomes of less than 30% of the area median income at the time of application. This assistance, which cannot be greater than \$300 per month, can also cover security deposits required for new leases or rental agreements. In total, this support cannot exceed \$3,000 in total assistance per household, per year. The bill additionally ensures an ongoing appropriation of \$1,900,000 annually to support these vital programs.

This committee is uniquely positioned to understand the intersection of these critical issues, as you work on both housing and economic development. While we have commendable efforts underway to increase our housing stock and preserve existing homes —efforts that will undoubtedly pay off in the long run, including a housing bond bill that I recently introduced to the appropriations

¹ <https://www.mdf.org/measures-of-growth/labor-force/#:~:text=In%202020%2C%20at%20the%20height,6%2C000%20below%20pre%2Dpandemic%20levels>.

committee—we must also act swiftly to prevent further homelessness and provide stable, secure housing for Maine families and employers today.

The cost of homelessness in Maine has significant implications for individuals, communities, and our state budget. A 2025 MaineHousing study indicates that the average annual cost per bed in Maine shelters is approximately \$34,714, equating to about \$95 per bed-night². Preble Street, one of our states largest homeless shelters, has found that sheltering and providing emergency services for a homeless individual can total around \$25,086 annually³. However, investing in our friends and neighbors now to help them remain in their homes and prevent the downward spiral of homelessness will save money and reduce harm for individuals and their communities. This bill would prevent homelessness in Maine.

² https://www.mainehousing.org/docs/default-source/policy-research/research-reports/homeless-reports/2025-shelter-cost-study.pdf?sfvrsn=bc669d15_3#:~:text=This%20study%20examines%20the%20operating,%2C%20youth%2C%20and%20domestic%20violence.

³ <https://www.preblestreet.org/2017/04/10/maine-homeless-shelters-require-significant-costs/#:~:text=According%20to%20a%20city%20of,and%20the%20state%20general%20fund.>