



# Preble Street

Good morning, Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and Members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee.

My name is Dan Hodgkins, and I am the Senior Director of Veterans Housing Services at Preble Street and a chair of Maine's Homeless Veteran Action Committee (HVAC). Our Veterans Housing Services Program provides low-barrier, high-quality case management services to Veterans experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness across the state. In FY25, we served 582 unduplicated veteran households across the entire state. Preble Street is a member of HVAC's No Homeless Veterans initiative, working in partnership with over 20 other organizations to end Veteran homelessness in Maine.

I am here today to urge you to support LD 2135, An Act to Provide Funding to Keep Maine Veterans Housed. This legislation represents a step forward in Maine's efforts to end Veteran homelessness through targeted support for best-practice landlord engagement initiatives. A landlord incentive is a sum of money provided to a landlord who agrees to rent to a tenant with limited rental history, a criminal record, or other barriers to housing, such as lived experience of homelessness. Another incentive is access to a Risk Mitigation Fund to reimburse landlords up to \$1500 for unpaid rent or damage in excess of the security deposit. These incentives allow case workers to quickly secure housing for homeless Veterans, as it separates them from other applicants in a competitive housing market. Between April and September of last year, we housed 166 Veteran households. In 65 of those cases, we provided the landlord with an incentive, typically around \$1,000, to lease up a Veteran for at least one year. All of the homeless veterans that were leased up last year were covered by the Risk Mitigation Fund. Landlords appreciate these incentives, which mitigate their risk and allow them to better support their community members; when another unit of theirs becomes available, they often call us first.

For "Tim," a 32-year-old Veteran, a landlord incentive was the difference between sleeping outside and having his own apartment. Tim was ready to start fresh, but his poor credit history made landlords hesitant to rent to him. When Tim's caseworker offered a landlord incentive, the landlord agreed to take a chance on him. Today, Tim remains stably housed and recently accepted a job that puts him over program income limits.

Radio ads are another best-practice landlord engagement strategy. These advertisements run on local radio stations, informing landlords about the benefits of renting to Veterans experiencing homelessness and explaining how to get in touch. In the quarter before we ran

radio ads last year, we housed 47 Veterans. Once we started to run these ads, we were able to house 74 Veterans. Additionally, we saw a significant increase in website traffic and received an average of 4 landlord inquiries per day. Additional funding through LD 2135 would support landlord engagement for housing homeless Veterans, a critical piece of ending Veteran homelessness in Maine. We urge you to continue the state's progress toward this goal by voting "Ought to Pass" on LD 2135.

Thank you for your time and consideration.