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Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, honorable members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee. Thank you for listening to testimony today for LD 1478, An Act to Decriminalize Homelessness. I urge you to support this bill because as you know, homelessness itself is not a criminal offense, so people should not be criminalized for doing certain things while homeless. As you have heard this bill criminalizes unavoidable and low level “illegal” behaviors for someone who is homeless.

Where is a person who is homeless supposed to relieve themselves? If someone waits too long to urinate they can face many problems such as urinary tract infections and bladder infections and a person cannot hold it forever. Also what if the person is “loitering” outside of mcdonalds or pre-covid in the lobby. It gets cold in Maine and some people have medical issues that make it so that they cannot walk around much. There are many reasons someone may have to loiter, or urinate outside, or even drink outside. By taking away the criminal offense and using it as an opportunity to help the person out of homelessness rather than giving them a criminal record which can make it harder to get on their feet you are giving them a chance rather than taking one away.

This is a no brainer. People facing homelessness should not be criminalized because of it. So I urge you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1478.

If you have any questions I can try to answer them.