



TESTIMONY JAMIE BLACKBURN, CORPORATION FOR SUPPORTIVE HOUSING
IN SUPPORT OF LD 475
RESOLVE, TO CREATE THE FREQUENT USERS SYSTEMS ENGAGEMENT COLLABORATION
BEFORE THE JOINT COMMITTEE FOR HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
MARCH 24, 2021

Representative Meyer, Senator Claxton, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee, I am Jamie Blackburn, Program Manager for the Corporation for Supportive Housing for the New England Region. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of LD 475.

The Frequent Users Systems Engagement model, also known as FUSE, is a CSH signature initiative that has been implemented in nearly 40 communities nationwide. In the last year since CSH first testified in support of a Maine FUSE collaborative the critical need for affordable, permanent housing and services for those who are most vulnerable has become even more evident. The pandemic has made it clear that the health of individuals and our communities is not possible when we rely on institutional settings like jails and prison, psychiatric hospitals, and emergency shelters as a housing resource for individuals who need stable housing and services.

FUSE uses supportive housing – which is safe, stable, affordable housing with integrated services – to engage individuals who frequently cycle in and out of jails, homeless shelters, and hospital emergency rooms. The FUSE model is an evidence-based solution that has also been included in the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness Solutions Database as a promising practice, and in the Housing Solutions Platform in Europe as one of “50 Out-of-the-Box Housing Solutions to Homelessness”.

Based on a frequent users case study, between 10-25% of individuals exit correctional institutions into homelessness, 44% have mental health disorders, and 24% have multiple chronic health conditions. This data exemplifies the cross-system challenges confronting vulnerable individuals who lack services and stable housing. States and local governments across the country, spend millions of dollars on expensive crisis and justice-based interventions only to see the same individuals continuing to cycle through. The FUSE model uses cross-systems data matching to identify the highest users of services. Outcomes have consistently demonstrated a reduction in use of emergency systems, improved health outcomes for fragile individuals, and cost savings across multiple systems.

FUSE has been formally evaluated in several communities and has shown impressive results.

- In Mecklenburg County, North Carolina there were 50% fewer arrests, 87% fewer shelter days, and 43% less hospital charges for the 50 FUSE participants.
- In New York City there was a 50% reduction in psychiatric input, 91% fewer shelter days, and an 86% housing retention rate after 2 years for the 200 program participants as compared to a matched comparison group that did not receive the intervention
- In Connecticut there was a cost reduction of \$7,800 per person, and 92% retention rate in supportive housing, and a 68% reduction in overnight hospitalizations for the 150 individuals served

I have also attached supporting information to this testimony that presents results from additional FUSE sites.

FUSE is also exceptionally successful because each jurisdiction where it is implemented, has an opportunity to customize their FUSE approach. FUSE results in each community could not have been achieved without the commitment and dedication of the leadership of multiple sectors coming together. This cross-systems approach is critical to developing an integrated approach, problem solving challenges, and monitoring outcomes.

CSH believes that LD 475 will create the necessary infrastructure to advance the FUSE program in Maine and better serve individuals without stable housing who frequently cycle in and out of costly public services. Over time, we are confident that you will also achieve reductions in use of emergency systems, improved health outcomes for fragile individuals, and cost savings across multiple systems.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to provide any additional information upon request.