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LD 475 "Resolve, To Create the Frequent Users System Engagement Collaborative"

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Kevin Joyce and I am the Sheriff of Cumberland County.

I offer this testimony in support of LD 475, "Resolve, To Create the Frequent Users System Engagement Collaborative."

Although not readily apparent outside large cities like Portland, Lewiston, Augusta, and Bangor, homelessness is an issue for Maine. Many of Maine's homeless individuals utilize the services of the already stretched thin public resources such as EMS services, Hospital Emergency Rooms, and jails. They are sometimes referred to as "frequent flyers".

Statistically, some members of the homeless population are arrested for criminal offenses that are considered a public nuisance such as, drinking in public, obstructing a public way, criminal trespass and urinating in public. I recently attended a public forum on homelessness and had an Aha moment when an individual explained that the reason that individuals commit the misdemeanor crimes of drinking in public, urinating in public and obstructing a public way is that if they had a home, the aforementioned would likely not occur. The activities such as drinking and urinating would occur in the residence and out of sight of others.



From a law enforcement and jail perspective, we know that individuals who enter the criminal justice system, sometimes get caught up in the "revolving door" because they don't have a home, they don't have a job and they don't know how to access the appropriate services necessary to become successful. The three tenets mentioned above play a dramatic impact on an individual's success.

Additionally, without a job or money, an individual cannot escape homelessness because they have no means to pay. Add to that, finding affordable housing, especially in Southern Maine, it is difficult if not possible.

FUSE is designed to address some of the challenges that a homeless individual faces each and every day. The FUSE program will assist with finding homes for some, while assisting with the services required to work toward a solution.

As the saying states, if continue to do what we have done, we will get what we have always gotten. It is time to start finding solutions to the homelessness issue as we annually spend a lot of resources on a few people and we accomplish little.

I am asking you to support LD 475 "Resolve, To Create the Frequent Users System Engagement Collaborative".

Thank you for your time,



Sheriff Kevin J. Joyce
Cumberland County

