



Maine Sheriffs' Association

"One Team, One Mission"

Sheriff Troy Morton, President

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March 24, 2021

L.D. 475 – Resolve, To Create the Frequent Users System Engagement Collaborative

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Troy Morton. I am the Sheriff of Penobscot County and President of the Maine Sheriffs' Association.

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

Frequent and familiar faces struggling with serious and persistent mental illness (SPMI) and substance use disorder (SUD), cycling through expensive shelter, jail, hospital, and detox beds does not always solve problems experienced by these populations. These options are extraordinarily expensive and do not create pathways for positive outcomes. Permanent supportive and repaid re-housing interventions are less expensive than cycling people through the previously identified options and they produce improved health and positive results for people experiencing homelessness and/or medical and mental health disabilities. The Statewide Homeless Council has been working with CSH on FUSE opportunities for the past two years and has the experience, know-how, and relationships to successfully create a unified response among the justice, medical and mental health, and homeless response systems.

Penobscot County has seen firsthand, the benefits of jail, medical/mental health, and homeless response systems collaboration. Essentially, the county has a small-scale FUSE established with the jail supporting and encouraging RISE and WISH services. There have been zero enrolled RISE participant overdose deaths. Inmates connected to WISH have historically seen a 70% decrease in jail nights, a 65% decrease in emergency department utilization, and a 64.7% rate of exits to stable housing; outcomes almost four times greater than the expectation of a low-barrier shelter. Critical to the success of this short-term grant funded opportunity is the combining of jail, healthcare, and homeless response system datasets, and strong combined and coordinated communication among these systems with a united goal. I am asking for your support for LD 475 - Resolve, To Create the Frequent Users System Engagement Collaborative. Together we can and will make a difference.

The MSA deeply appreciates your consideration. I would be pleased to answer any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

Sheriff Troy Morton
President, Maine Sheriffs' Association