



Cumberland County District Attorney's Office

142 Federal Street, Portland, ME 04101
Phone: 207-871-8384 Fax: 207-775-3561



Jonathan Sahrbeck
District Attorney

Jennifer Ackerman
Deputy District Attorney

March 24, 202`

State of Maine Committee on Health and Human Services
c/o Legislative Information Office
Via: HHS@legislature.maine.gov

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

Dear Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and members of the Committee:

I am writing in support of the LD 475 "Resolve, To Create the Frequent Users System Engagement Collaborative." The District Attorney's Office in Cumberland County is tasked with enforcing the law, protecting public safety, speaking for victims, creating solutions that reduce recidivism, and acting in the interests of justice. When people ask what is needed to reduce recidivism among those who come in contact with the criminal justice system, housing is always at the forefront. Without stable housing, it is likely, in fact it is common, for a person to come in contact with law enforcement either as a victim or as a defendant. Given that, the correlation between housing and criminal justice system is undeniable. We need to take steps in our State to try to provide more opportunities to be able to provide housing, which in turn would keep people out of the criminal justice system, reduce recidivism, and increase public safety.

It is time that the State explore new approaches, any approach, which is going to be able to help individuals obtain and maintain housing. The Frequent Users System Engagement (FUSE) is one of these approaches. FUSE is a system that has been helpful in other parts of the country. It creates opportunities for individuals to find housing and then, once housed, keep it. It addresses the issues that a person is facing, whether it be substance use disorder or mental health, and provides necessary supports that address such issues. FUSE reduces harm to individuals by addressing where people are in their treatment or recovery. Finally, it helps that people are able to maintain and keep their housing, which so vital to their well-being and community public safety.

The success of FUSE for individuals within their system speaks for itself. Housing retention rates in programs is around 80%, enrollment in health care systems is 87%, and there is a reduction of 50% of inappropriate emergency room visits, freeing up those resources for critical care to others. Participants report increases in their quality of life, their use of treatment and recovery systems, and their use of multidisciplinary care teams. There is also increased communication and cooperation between system providers who help these individuals.

Thank you for the consideration,

Jonathan Sahrbeck
Cumberland County District Attorney