



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
2 STATE HOUSE STATION  
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002  
(207) 287-1440

**Justin Fecteau**

7 Davis Street  
Augusta, ME 04330  
Cell Phone: (207) 248-7183  
Justin.Fecteau@legislature.maine.gov

March 15, 2021

**Testimony in Support of LD 658:  
An Act To Provide Funding for 3 Veterans Services  
Officers in the Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services**

Good morning Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo, and my colleagues on the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs. I am Justin Fecteau and I proudly represent House District 86, which consists of the western and northern portions of Augusta.

There are very few truths on Planet Earth: taxes are unavoidable, death is imminent, and a Veteran's oath to this Country is unbreakable. As a US Army Combat Veteran, I take my oath seriously.

Each branch has their own creed. In the Army, the Soldier's Creed states, "I will never leave a fallen comrade." That line has always stayed with me. It is the reason for this bill.

This year has been difficult for several populations in the State of Maine. One of the most impacted of all of our populations is our homeless. Record low availability in temporary housing and reduced community services have made this year more challenging than it had to be.

When I reached out to the Bureau of Veterans' Services in the summer and then once again in the late fall, I inquired about the status of Veteran homelessness and case management. I quickly learned that the number of identified homeless Veterans that were unable to receive direct or indirect support from the Bureau had ballooned from 80 to 160 Veterans. I've diagnosed this not as an issue with dedication or commitment, but an issue with manpower. If a staff person has to hop into a van and dart across the state to find a homeless veteran, it is hard for any others to be served that day.

While I truly believe our homeless Veteran population is an extreme failure of our federal government, because they have never truly accounted for the entire cost of war; it becomes our responsibility to pick up the slack.

I could spend the rest of my testimony quoting article after article, story after story, but we've seen them all. If the issue of Veteran homelessness was easy, we would have already solved it.

As you know, Veteran homelessness is not just a game of finding people on the streets and getting them shelter, it's much more complicated than that. In my district alone, female veterans were threatened with eviction last spring - in the middle of a world health crisis. It stopped when a few of us spoke up.

Many of our vulnerable Veterans find themselves with substance use issues, mental health challenges, zero case management, and a lack of knowledge of the programs available to them. This is where the Bureau becomes such an invaluable resource. By providing the Bureau with a little more manpower, we can reduce the ballooning number, engage the dozens of statewide organizations, and assist Veterans with access to the VA right here in Augusta.

I welcome questions and input in order to tackle this ongoing situation and earn the committee's support.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Justin Fecteau". The signature is stylized with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Rep. Justin Fecteau