



TESTIMONY

In Support of

LD 1557: An Act To Ensure the Provision of Housing Coordination Services to Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities

**Brenda Gallant
Maine Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

April 27, 2021

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and committee members, my name is Brenda Gallant. I am the Long-Term Care Ombudsman. The Maine Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is a statewide non-profit organization that provides advocacy for older adults and adults with disabilities who receive long-term services and supports in all settings. We serve residents in nursing homes, assisted housing including residential care and assisted living facilities, adult day programs and recipients of home care services. Additionally, we serve patients in hospitals who experience barriers in accessing long-term services and supports.

We are pleased to provide to provide testimony in support of this legislation that requires the establishment of a Housing Coordinator position within the Department of Health and Human Services. This position would be responsible for collaboration with other state agencies and disability service provider organizations and make publicly available housing assistance information and resources. Additionally, the position would be responsible for identifying gaps in housing assistance needs, submitting a report on gaps to the Director for inclusion in the comprehensive state plan on aging and establishing partnerships.

As a result of our experience in working with individuals who transition from nursing homes to the community through Money Follows the Person, we know well the challenges that exist for older persons and persons with disabilities in accessing affordable, accessible housing. We believe there will be a direct benefit from the creation of a Housing Coordinator within the department to support collaboration among state agencies to identify strategies for planning and public information regarding housing resources.

Currently, within the Office of Aging and Disability Services, there is a Housing Resource Developer. The individual who occupies this position works with our agency on housing for individuals transitioning from nursing homes. Additionally, he provides assistance for us with individuals transitioning from residential care and hospitals. He is assisting Maine State Housing on a grant for housing for individuals with disabilities. He has a broad range of other duties related to housing. The position created through this legislation may be helpful in expanding the department's efforts regarding housing assistance and resource development for older persons and persons with disabilities.

Thank you for your consideration.