

Testimony of the Greater Portland Council of Governments in Support of Portions of LD 3, *An Act to Establish the Winter Energy Relief Payment Program to Aid Residents with High Heating Costs and to Finalize the COVID Pandemic Relief Payment Program*

December 21, 2022

President Jackson, Speaker Ross and members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee I am Kristina Egan, Executive Director of the Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG). I am submitting this written testimony in support of portions of LD 3, *An Act to Establish the Winter Energy Relief Payment Program to Aid Residents with High Heating Costs and to Finalize the COVID Pandemic Relief Payment Program*.

GPCOG serves twenty-five municipal members, from Sebago Lake to Casco Bay, and the County of Cumberland. We staff the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization which allocates over \$30 million dollars annually in federal transportation funds to regional priority highway and public transportation projects, extending our service territory into York County, including Saco and Biddeford.

GPCOG also serves as the Portland region's Economic Development District, as designated by the U.S. Department of Commerce, and we support numerous programs like Maine Clean Communities and the Maine Broadband Coalition, along with the ever-changing needs of our member communities.

Like the rest of the state, our region is suffering from a wide-ranging housing crisis. Working families, retirees, young people, and everyone with low-to-moderate income are struggling to find housing they can afford in the places they want to live.

Today, we offer our full support to LD 3's provisions that provide relief to unhoused persons in our region, and to those facing the imminent loss of housing.

Part A, Section A-3 of LD 3 authorizes the transfer of \$21,000,000 from the General Fund to the Maine State Housing Authority's Emergency Housing Relief Fund Program to provide funds for short-term emergency housing. The Maine State Housing Authority will prioritize these funds for use in addressing emergency housing needs occurring between December 1, 2022 and April 30, 2023, for those households that were experiencing homelessness or housing instability in the State prior to December 1, 2022.

Our region, and the entire state, urgently needs this additional funding to meet the immediate housing crisis facing so many people this winter. We urge your unanimous support so that this new funding can secure critical housing for those most in need.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and please let me know if GPCOG can help you with your important work on LD 3.