



Stacy Brenner
Senator, District 30

THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

388 Broadturn Road
Scarborough, Maine 04074

December 21, 2022

Testimony in support 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”

President Jackson, Speaker Talbot-Ross, and honorable colleagues of the Temporary Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, I am Senator Stacy Brenner and I represent Senate District 30, which includes Gorham and most of Scarborough. I’m here today to speak in support 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.”

Now that the snow and the below-freezing temperatures are upon us, it is critical that we give Maine people the relief that they deserve. This Legislature has the opportunity to work together on a unified, bipartisan action to ensure that our constituents have the funds they need to feed their children, heat their homes, and avoid experiencing homelessness. The current crisis has put so much stress on the town of Scarborough that the town is not equipped to address the situation at hand. Jon Anderson, the Town Council Chair for Scarborough reached out to explain the extent of the emergency:

“As you are aware, Scarborough is facing a challenge for people without homes. The most challenging and urgent issue has to do with the Comfort Inn. Currently, the hotel owner is in process of evicting the residents as he claims he plans to renovate the hotel in the winter and re-open in the Spring. The Council made his license contingent on providing security and social services to the current residents, all of who were placed there by Opportunity Alliance for various reasons. As I’m sure you’ve heard, this particular facility has required a lot of attention and support from our public safety team, which comes at a cost of serving the rest of the community, including our social services coordinator. We are just not adequately resourced. The town is trying to do all it can to try and manage this complex issue - but we don’t have the resources, experience, facilities or finances to handle this immediate crisis. Neither does the business owner, whose funding was canceled by Opportunity Alliance, resulting in them pulling the social service workers that have been supporting the facility.

“We will likely have to hold a public hearing at the beginning of the year as they may no longer be providing social and security services. We may be forced to revoke the business license due to non-compliance with our terms and the continued deterioration of the facility, that is also putting the residents’ health and well-being at risk. Given that people without homes is a regional, state, and federal issue - what do you think can be done at the state level? Our biggest concern is finding short term social services to support this. The Town has tried to find someone, but nobody wants to provide the support since it’s very volatile right now. Can the state help here and help to provide services immediately?

“We do need a long-term solution to people without homes in our region and in Scarborough. The current centers in Portland and Lewiston are no longer sufficient and the challenge is now ours to address. I’m sure you have seen or heard about the small encampment along Payne Road. I hope that the Council will agree to start to focus more on that in 2023, but we will still need help and assistance from the State. I



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hope each of you will be committed to partner with us so we can do what we can to address this need because we can't do it unilaterally and we need more state and federal support.”

I cannot stress enough how vital it is to pass this emergency bill. Winter is here, and we have to take action now. We must put our differences aside and do what is best for the people. Thank you for your time, and I would urge you to support this bill along with the others we are hearing today.

Stacy Brenner

State Senator