

Aimee Labbe  
Poland  
LD 3

Dear Senators,

I am writing to urge you to reconsider LD3 Emergency Funding for Housing BEFORE the holiday break. As you are likely aware, the incidents of homelessness have risen in recent months due to inflation, heating costs, increasing rent, and many other factors. I have personally seen an exponential increase in the number of unhoused folks along Lisbon Street in Lewiston (where I work) in the last 6 months. As we enter a season of bitter cold and snow, I am deeply concerned for my neighbors and fellow Mainers, many of them including families with young children, who will be forced to sleep in vehicles, tents, and worst of all -- on the streets -- due to full shelters and already stretched-thin and limited resources. It truly breaks my heart, most especially because I know this will mean some of these folks will die from the elements.

I believe that a safe and warm home is a basic human right, and should be a non-negotiable for every single person in our country, and certainly in our state. Rather than meeting folks who are struggling, for a variety of reasons, with judgment and shame, I urge you to dig deep and find empathy for your fellow neighbors. To imagine what it would be like if you, in your deepest time of need, were helped and supported by your community and your leaders. What a difference that would make for our entire state and EVERY ONE of us if that sort of kindness and humanity was spread.

I have two young boys, ages 5 and 2. We talk a lot about helping our neighbors and those who may be struggling. They see unhoused people asking for money or balled up in sleeping bags on the doorsteps of businesses and ask what we can do to help. I tell them we can donate money to organizations helping these people, we can make kits with gift cards and handwarmers to hand out. But the truth is, we all, and I, could do more. What I haven't done yet and what has been the hardest for me to do is to reach out to our state leaders to advocate on behalf of these folks who desperately need our help. If I am being honest, it's because I'm cynical about politicians, and I'm not sure it would do any good—to take the time out of my busy life to write an email that may never actually reach you, and may not change your mind. But deep in my heart, I choose to believe that you have entered into public service because you truly care about Mainers—ALL Mainers—and you chose this path because you want to make their lives better. So, here we are. I'm asking you to put aside party and politics and reconsider this bill before Jan. 4, which is three weeks away. Our neighbors do not have the luxury of waiting three weeks for a lifeline. And while I'm here, I'm also asking you to support this bill, and any other measures that ensure our neighbors have access to a safe and warm place to live. I am not naive and know this is a complex issue that will require a complex solution. But we cannot throw the baby out with the bathwater by refusing to offer ANY help to people who are suffering while we debate longer-term solutions.

Public service is difficult and I don't envy your job, but it's one you were elected to because people in our state believe you have what it takes to make our state a safer, healthier, and better place to live. I respectfully ask you to appreciate the urgency and importance of this situation and take action. Your constituents are counting on you now more than ever.

Thank you,  
Aimee and Christopher Labbe  
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