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To whom it may concern,

Please pass this emergency bill that will provide heating and housing assistance to Mainers immediately. The need for this aid is overwhelming and should not be delayed.

At age 65, I work 6 days a week at a low wage job. As I live and work in Portland, where the cost of living has quickly outpaced my income (even with overtime pay) I am having to make tough choices on which bills to pay...heating oil, housing, electricity, water, food, car insurance, etc. I am in a tough position. I cannot afford to live here, but I also cannot afford to move. I am at retirement age, but unable to retire.

I suspect that despite making less than a livable wage in Portland, I make too much to qualify for heating assistance. As a result, the \$450 in emergency heating relief aid would be helpful to me to cover at least a few weeks' worth of oil this winter.

Prior to my current employment, I worked as a fisherman in Maine for over 40 years. During that time, I struggled with substance abuse as well as periods of not having a home. I was fortunate that the fishing community looked out for me and kept me safe. Otherwise, I would probably not be here today. I am thankful to have many years of sobriety under my belt, but that would have never been accomplished if I had not been able to access stable housing. Having a place to call home and someone to advocate for me, were the keys to turning my life around.

Everyone deserves the dignity of housing and heat, especially during Maine winter. Citizens are living outside in the cold, others are facing eviction, or trying to figure out ways to stay warm without heat.

The need is urgent. The time is now. Please pass this bill. Lives depend on it.
Thank you.