



Testimony before the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
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

Senator Jackson, Representative Talbot Ross and Members of the Committee:

I am Marge Kilkelly, former state legislator and a current member of the Board of Directors of the Maine Council of Churches. The Council has seven member-denominations and two associate member congregations who represent 437 local churches in Maine with 55,000 parishioners. I am testifying on behalf of the Council **in support of LD 3.**

Churches in Maine have a long history of supporting people in need in their communities. Food pantries, community gardens, holiday food baskets, emergency funds for heat, lights and medicine to name a few. The generosity of churches, however, is limited by the ability of the congregation members to meet their own needs and then give to others.

The challenge facing families today, as I am sure all of you heard as you campaigned door to door just a few weeks ago, is that the cost of heating homes is not an issue only facing those with low income but also those households where two or more are working. Both Sec. A-2 and Sec. B-3 Winter Energy Relief Payment Program are critical to address the challenges facing individuals and families who otherwise do not qualify for HEAP or other assistance.

Some criticism of the bill is that it is not adequately targeted, we would argue that the unique demographics of Maine mean that it is in fact targeted – the combination of the highest use of heating oil in the country and the dramatic cost increase means that every Maine family will see significant increases in heating their homes this year.

- Maine is unique in that heating oil use is higher in Maine than any other state at 59% ¹
- Three-fifths of Maine's households use fuel oil as their primary energy source for home heating, a larger share than any other state.²
- Reuters in November 2022 reported that heating oil cost U.S. households 65% more in Oct from year-ago -EIA³

We urge you to pass LD3, which will provide a benefit to working families that do not qualify for other assistance, and believe it is both reasonable and necessary.

¹ <https://energyathaas.wordpress.com/2021/11/01/the-geography-of-heating-oil-and-propane/>

² <https://www.eia.gov/state/print.php?sid=ME#:~:text=Maine%20Quick%20Facts,the%20largest%20share%20at%2027%25.>

³ <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/heating-oil-cost-us-households-65-more-oct-year-ago-eia-2022-11-17/>