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The Winter Energy Relief Payment Program is critical to the lives and health of thousands of Mainers, and I'm sure those reading this testimony know this. You don't need me to tell you. It's abundantly clear, even if you are someone who does not need financial assistance, that the cost of living in Maine...in the country...is out of control. What the working people of Maine need is for our legislators to act with the same level of urgency we feel. That the cost of living is resulting in life or death situations; it's making Maine unaffordable to young people; it's stopping people from getting the healthcare they need; it's preventing people from having children or properly caring for the children they have.

This Relief Program will save lives, it will keep families together, it will help protect people without any resources or support from the devastation of being unable to pay for the basics. This program, though, is just a gesture towards the need for much, much more comprehensive and aggressive policy that would create REAL change for Maine people. This state is not thriving - it's dying. Passing this bill is one step. Bold, aggressive policy is essential to addressing the root cause of the financial hardship and ecological collapse. And it's my hope that our legislators ACT like their lives depend on it. Because this is your home, too.