

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 distinguished members of the Legislature’s Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, my name is Henry Ingwersen, and I proudly represent the people of Senate District 32, which includes Arundel, Biddeford, Dayton, Hollis, and Lyman.

I am here today, on this first day of winter and during some of the coldest nights yet, to testify in support of LD 3, an emergency measure that provides direct heating and housing relief to Mainers who need it most. The fact that I am here before you today, 2 full weeks after we failed to approve emergency help to our own neighbors who we know are in crisis, is heartbreaking. We are failing our fellow neighbors. They have come to our door asking for help during a traditional season of giving, love, and sharing the light, and the door is still closed. We have left them in the cold and dark these last couple of weeks. Like Joseph and Mary, we said to them, “There is no room at the inn for you.”

Our neighbors need help and they need it now - money for a bit of heating oil in the tank and to help pay the rising electric bills. Many Mainers who have a home to live in are confronted with the possibility of eviction with the emergency rental assistance coming to an end this year. In my district alone there are hundreds of households - not individuals, households - that have benefitted from this rental program and now that it’s gone, they need our help so that they and their families aren’t sent into the streets, the door closed and locked behind them. If that happens there is nowhere for them to go. And for the unhoused, there are few resources. There is no room at the inn.

We Mainers are a proud and independent bunch, reluctant to ask for help, but we also have a long and proud tradition of looking after our neighbors, especially during the long winters we have here. Right now, we are abandoning this tradition. We are abandoning our humanity if we do not pass this emergency relief immediately.

As we all witnessed 2 weeks ago, this measure has strong bipartisan support and is rooted in compromise. Because of that it is not a perfect bill. I would recommend that the income eligibility threshold be lowered from \$100,000 to \$75,000 per individual. But, for the sake of getting this emergency passed, I’m willing to sacrifice the perfect for the common good, and I hope we all can. Let’s get this help out the door now.

Thank You,  
State Senator Henry Ingwersen

