

Christina Cataldo
Winthrop
LD 3

To Senator Jackson, Representative Talbot Ross, and Members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee:

My name is Christina Cataldo. I am a pastor in Winthrop, Maine, and I live in Sidney, Maine. I have personally seen how much people are struggling to afford to stay housed and warm this season. My church keeps a modest fund to help people pay emergency bills. We are regularly getting calls with requests to help pay rent and heating and asking for help to cover emergency short term lodging in hotels. I spoke with one family recently that, due to health issues and changes in jobs, just couldn't afford their heating bill. This week, I've also spoken with someone who is actively homeless, living out of their undrivable car, because the shelters in Augusta are full. In fact, there are multiple families in the small town where I serve that are living in cars. We also recently helped another person who has been trying to find a job closer to home, but can't, and who is having a hard time affording rent because their gas bill is so much more than it used to be. While my church is happy to share what we can, we know the funds we share are simply a short-term fix. The state of Maine need some larger systemic support to address the crisis many of our neighbors are facing. We must choose to prevent the suffering of so many people. In order to love our neighbors, we must help them stay in safe and warm housing. And, it will take more money than small churches like mine can raise.