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United Way
of Greater Portland



CHARITY
NAVIGATOR

Four Star Charity

Good afternoon, Senator Jackson, Representative Talbot Ross, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs.

My name is Ryan Knipple. I am an Assistant Director at Preble Street and oversee the team which provides housing and support services to homeless individuals and families being temporarily sheltered at The Comfort Inn in South Portland.

Preble Street asks that you vote “ought to pass” on LD 3 and ensure that the families and individuals in the ERA shelter hotels stay safe and sheltered throughout the winter.

Emergency Rental Assistance funds had been helping to shelter many people, both families and individuals, in hotels and motels throughout the state. These rooms have provided folks with warm, dry places to sleep and store their belongings. At a time when shelters across the state are full, the ability to access shelter in hotels has been critical and lifesaving for many.

This legislation will enable this essential temporary shelter to continue.

If this legislation doesn’t pass, you will see families and individuals across Maine evicted from their current homes and shelters into the darkest and coldest winter months. For many of these folks, this is their first-time experiencing homelessness. There isn’t enough shelter or housing for folks to be able to find a place to go by the end of this month; we are in a state of crisis.

The needs of people experiencing homelessness far exceed the supply of available shelters.

In the Portland area, every shelter and hotel is filled to the brim with folks seeking housing. The funding that allowed the hotels to operate in this time period has acted as a lifeline for countless individuals and families.

In the next 10 days, the Scarborough Comfort Inn is set to evict the last of its residents. One of them is a veteran we have been working with. He is a wheelchair-bound amputee, and still resides at the Comfort Inn as crisis looms. Through persistent work, Preble Street’s Veterans Housing Services has managed to secure him a voucher, but this is only half the battle. Now he has to find an apartment that he can afford. And he has to find one that will accept a voucher. This disabled veteran will most certainly not find an apartment to rent by December 30th.

If this legislation does not pass, he will have nowhere to go but the street.

In visiting with this community in Scarborough, any person can witness the wide range of vibrant members in that community, from babbling babies and young families to dogs and older folks. When Preble Street conducted healthcare surveys in the hotel earlier this fall, there was palpable energy, and a heartening sense of solidarity amongst the residents. The folks living in this hotel have become a source of ongoing support and community for one another during difficult times.

With this legislation, we must seize this opportunity to expand emergency housing funding so that our neighbors do not fall through the cracks. They do not have the resources or the physical stamina to withstand a winter outside.

Please vote ought to pass on LD 3.

Thank you.

Ryan Knipple
Preble Street
LD 3

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