



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

From: Elsie Flemings, Executive Director, on behalf of Healthy Acadia

To President Jackson, Speaker Ross, and Honorable Members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee,

I am writing in strong 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. This LD is critical to ensuring the health and safety of Mainers this winter. We know that many families and individuals throughout our region and across Maine are struggling with high costs of housing, heating, electricity, food, and more, and they are facing impossible choices this winter to make ends meet. With the passage of LD 3, we can help ensure that those who are in vulnerable situations are able to keep themselves and their families safe, warm, and healthy.

Healthy Acadia is a community and public health coalition devoted to our mission to empower people and organizations as we build healthy communities together. We have been working since 2001 with hundreds of partners and thousands of community members to address a wide range of local health needs. We serve Washington and Hancock counties, and we provide additional community health support and partnership across Maine.

As a part of the broad range of programming we coordinate, we have been working significantly with partners to address the emergency housing crisis that has been growing across Hancock and Washington counties, and we know how critical it is, especially as the cold weather sets in, to bring more resources into our communities to protect vulnerable families. We are confident that LD 3 - to support both emergency heating and housing - is essential to help families and individuals in Downeast Maine and across the state. We are lucky in our region to have strong collaboratives working together on this issue, and **LD 3 will significantly aid the on-the-ground efforts to keep people alive, safe, and healthy this winter.**

Please do all you can to support rapid passage of LD 3, including emergency housing and heating assistance. Every day Mainers are struggling with homelessness, cold, and fear of what the winter will bring. The passage of LD 3 will bring significantly needed supports to our communities, protecting those who are most vulnerable and supporting the health of our whole communities.

Respectfully submitted,
Elsie Flemings
Executive Director
Healthy Acadia