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**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."**

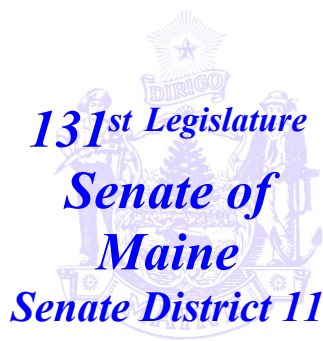
*Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs  
December 21, 2022*

President Jackson, Speaker Talbot Ross, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, I am Senator Chip Curry, and I represent the 26 rural, coastal, and island communities of Waldo County. As a State Senator, I have had the privilege of meeting and listening to the concerns of my constituents all across Waldo County. And I can tell you, without a doubt, that high heating costs are a burden that weighs heavily on many of our neighbors.

I am here today to voice my strong support for 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." In a year when global forces have dramatically increased the costs of oil, propane and electricity, this bill offers a literal lifeline to those who are struggling to keep their families warm and safe this winter. It is our duty as legislators to do everything in our power to help our fellow Mainers during these extraordinary times.

All over Waldo County, people are volunteering their time and donating their scarce resources to make sure their neighbors and loved ones can safely get through this winter. I'm certain the same is happening in your districts as well. **But it's not enough.** Our communities, our seniors, those living on fixed incomes, and those working hard but not making enough need us to **act now**. The provisions of LD 3 are truly a blessing for those in need. The one-time emergency energy relief payment of \$450 will provide much-needed relief to an estimated 880,000 eligible Maine residents. In addition, the supplemental funding for the Home Energy Assistance Program and the emergency home heating oil, combined with local initiatives, will help stretch our resources so that, hopefully, no one freezes inside their homes this winter.

LD 3's short-term housing support will help prevent homelessness in rural areas like mine, which is often overlooked but affects many of our neighbors. Ask any of our faith-based leaders, general assistance administrators, public health nurses, and social service providers in rural Maine and they'll tell you the same. The Emergency Housing Relief Fund has been a critical part of providing emergency housing and emergency shelters. The additional funding from LD 3 will allow this vital program to continue its important work through this winter. Without this support, many of our neighbors could find themselves evicted and living in cars or worse, facing a bitter and dangerous Maine winter without a roof over their heads.



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During this holiday season, I'm praying for our neighbors who are facing the challenges of this winter with few resources. I'm praying for a mild winter, I'm praying for the price of oil and propane to drop, and I'm praying that we can come together to pass this emergency life-saving legislation as soon as possible. Let's pass LD 3 and show the people of Maine that when they ask us to come to Augusta and work for them, we deliver.

Thank you for your time today. I am happy to answer questions.