



Jill Duson
Senator, District 27

THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

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 honorable members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, I am Senator Jill Duson and I proudly serve the people of Senate District 27, which includes parts of Westbrook and Portland.

Like everyone else in this room, I’ve spent months speaking with and listening to good folks around my district about their hopes and concerns. And just like all of you, I heard over and over again just how worried Maine families are about being able to afford the basic necessities: Putting food on the table, keeping the lights on, and keeping a roof over their heads. In the Portland area, the need for emergency housing assistance is constant, with the massive increase of housing costs. Dedicated staff and volunteers at nonprofits around the city help individuals, families, veterans and even children find a safe place to stay and a filling meal to eat. More than that, they help folks get back on their feet and find stable employment and housing.

A constituent wrote to me saying, “I am writing to you now from the domestic violence shelter I work in, and I can say with great sadness that the situation is grim. Every day there are continuous calls from members of the community who have never faced this kind of situation before, suddenly unhoused for the first time in their lives with no support and nothing to fall back on. They have no money saved, as they have had it taken from them by controlling partners, or they were not allowed to work at all in their abusive relationship. They are calling in with children who they want to keep safe but finding that this uphill battle of affording housing and heat alone is so insurmountable that they are forced to settle into dangerous situations.”

Our constituents need help now. Winter is already here, and we must do something, especially now that the snow is firmly on the ground. I truly feel this is the kind of work my constituents sent me to these hallowed halls to do. I stand in firm support of the motion before us, and I hope that my newly sworn-in colleagues will follow my light.

Thank you.