

12/21/22

Good afternoon Madam Speaker, Mr. President, and members of the committee.

I am Lawrence Lockman, I live in Bradley, and I am here to testify against LD 3.

What struck me immediately upon reading the bill is the dishonesty of the bill's title. While it purports to be about energy relief payments to aid residents with high heating costs, it appears that only about 10 percent of the spending is related to that purpose.

The \$50 million allocation for low-income heating assistance pales in comparison to the \$398 million allocation for sending \$450 checks to 880,000 Mainers with household incomes up to \$200,000. Recipients are free to spend the one-time gift from Augusta on whatever they please. These are NOT energy relief payments.

The other piece of the bill that's unrelated to energy assistance is the \$21 million for "emergency housing." That's in addition to the \$22 million worth of emergency funding passed earlier this year.

A big chunk of this will provide free rent for the thousands of "asylum seekers" the Governor has welcomed to Maine since she took office, at a time when Maine has been experiencing a severe housing shortage. Three quarters or more of these non-citizens will lose their asylum claims, but nobody expects the illegals to self-deport when that happens. They're here to stay.

And one of the places they'll be staying are the brand new apartment buildings in Portland, South Portland, and Brunswick, under construction by Avesta Housing. These 175 units of housing for non-citizens will be rent-free for the first two years, courtesy of Maine taxpayers.

Meanwhile, upwards of 25,000 Mainers languish on affordable housing waitlists. They often wait for years for housing assistance.

And speaking of waitlists, some 3,800 disabled Mainers remain on the notorious Medicaid waitlists that date back to the Baldacci administration. Given that scandalous reality, how does Gov. Mills dare to pillage \$157 million in federal Medicaid funds to pay for her LD 3 give-away?

How many Mainers languishing on the Medicaid waitlists with traumatic brain injuries could receive the medical care they need if that \$157 million worth of Medicaid matching funds were allocated as intended?

How many of the nursing homes that have been forced to close their doors over the past 5 years could be reopened and staffed if they had access to the Medicaid funds that LD 3 proposes to spend on one-time welfare payments to everyone in Maine with a heartbeat and a household income less than \$200,000?

Please give LD 3 what it so richly deserves: a unanimous "ought not to pass" report.