



Testimony of Stephanie Eglinton
Executive Director, Maine Children's Alliance

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"
December 21, 2022

Good afternoon, Senator Jackson, Representative Talbot Ross, and members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs. My name is Stephanie Eglinton and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Children's Alliance. We are a statewide, non-partisan organization whose mission is to promote sound public policies and promote best practices to improve the lives of all Maine children, youth, and families.

On behalf of the Maine Children's Alliance, I urge you to support LD 3, which will provide emergency home heating and rental assistance for Maine families as the cold weather sets in. With the high costs of fuel prices and the ongoing housing crisis in our state, thousands of families struggle to meet the basic need of safe and stable housing. Others today have spoken to the specific numbers in the legislation. I would like to focus on the critical role that housing stability plays in child and family well-being.

Housing instability includes the stress of being behind on rent, frequent moves and changes of school systems, as well as the trauma of eviction and periods of homelessness. It can have profound impacts on caregiver and child well-being, adversely affecting mental and physical health and education outcomes.ⁱ High levels of stress on families to meet basic needs is associated with child maltreatment.ⁱⁱ

Prevention of crisis is both the humane and smart policy for investing in the future of Maine. Relief for those who are struggling now should be the priority today. At the same time, longer-term solutions need to be implemented to ensure that all Maine families have the opportunity to meet basic needs. It is no surprise that warm, safe, and stable housing plays a critical role in the positive development of children.

I also would like to recognize that the disability community has raised concerns about any de-appropriation of funds from MaineCare for Mainers with disabilities as revenue for this initiative. I encourage the committee to consider these concerns in the final package.

Thank you for your consideration.

ⁱ Gaitan, Veronica. (2019) How Housing Affects Children's Outcomes. Housing Matters. <https://housingmatters.urban.org/articles/how-housing-affects-childrens-outcomes>

ⁱⁱ Conrad-Hiebner, A., & Byram, E. (2020). The Temporal Impact of Economic Insecurity on Child Maltreatment: A Systematic Review. Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 21(1), 157–178. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838018756122>