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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

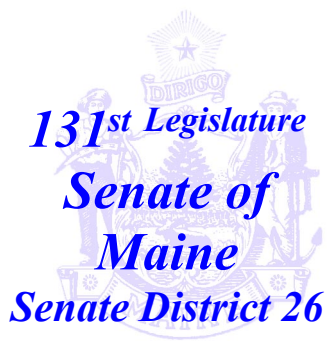
December 21, 2022

President Jackson, Speaker Talbot Ross, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, I am Senator Tim Nangle, and I represent the communities of Casco, Frye Island, Raymond, Windham, and part of Westbrook.

I am here to voice my strong support for LD 3 and ask that we pass this bill as soon as possible. All of us legislators just spent months listening to voters in our district. We made phone calls, knocked on doors, and heard first-hand the problems our constituents have asked us to come to Augusta and solve. I don't know what other legislators may have heard, but when I knocked on doors and talked to my neighbors, nearly everyone I heard from was worried about how they would afford to keep their homes warm this winter. To anyone paying attention, it is clear that this is a real and pressing concern for many Mainers.

But as I listened to the discussion around LD 1, I couldn't help but feel frustrated by the focus on process and bureaucracy. The people I've met, who were concerned about staying warm this winter, do not care about the technicalities of how the emergency energy relief payment will be distributed – they just want the peace of mind that they won't be thrown out on the streets or left to freeze in their homes. It seems like such a no-brainer to me that we should be doing everything we can to help our neighbors stay warm and safe during the winter.

We didn't need a public hearing to know that people are struggling. They've already told us. Overall, I am grateful that LD 3 will provide much-needed relief for so many Maine families.



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But I can't help but feel that the process for getting this support in place was unnecessary. It's a shame that it's taking us this long to provide life-saving assistance to our fellow Mainers, just because a minority of senators blocked LD 1 earlier this month.

It's clear that LD 3 is necessary to provide crucial support to those at risk of homelessness and struggling to afford heating costs. I ask that you support LD 3 and get this bill to the chambers as quickly as possible. Mainers cannot afford any more delays to this life-saving support.