



April 3, 2023

Good Shepherd Food Bank of Maine testimony to the Committee on Housing in support of LD 2, An Act to End Chronic Homelessness by Creating the Housing First Fund

To Chairperson Pierce, Chairperson Gere, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing.

My name is Rebekah Lane and I am the Community Organizer for Good Shepherd Food Bank of Maine. I am here today to express our support, and ask for your support, of LD 2 An Act to End Chronic Homelessness by Creating the Housing First Fund.

The mission of Good Shepherd Food Bank is to eliminate hunger in Maine by improving access to nutritious food for people in need, building strong community partnerships, and mobilizing the public in the fight to end hunger. Good Shepherd Food Bank works in partnership with nearly 600 organizations to help distribute food to community members in need. Our network of partner agencies includes food pantries, meal sites, senior centers, school programs, and healthcare facilities. In our work centering equity, we are increasingly working with communities of color to address food security in a culturally responsive way.

We believe there is a solution to the problem of hunger in Maine. Working in partnership with the state legislature we can and will help reduce the impact of hunger in our state and make Maine a stronger, better place to work and live.

Hunger often proceeds homelessness because for those faced with the choice of food or shelter, food takes understandable priority. Hunger and homelessness is bidirectional, with those experiencing hunger being 62% more likely to experience homelessness within 5 years, and those who are homeless being 40% more likely to experience hunger within the same timeframe. Those who have housing stay fed and those who are fed stay housed, which is why Good Shepherd is here today testifying on this housing bill.

People experiencing food insecurity are disproportionately affected by chronic health conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure, which can lead to more doctors visits, sick days, or hospitalizations that can result in losing employment, which is the most common primary event that leads to homelessness. And those experiencing both homelessness and food insecurity are twice as likely to have diabetes, hypertension, or suffer from a heart attack than those housed.

No matter what starts this loop of being resourced deprived, once someone finds themselves food or housing insecure they lose the ability to control their food intake, which results in further health crisis and higher support needs. Often the only hot meals that those who are unhoused have access to are higher in calories, sodium, and carbohydrates rather than being nutrient dense, which can make chronic conditions worse. The times my family has struggled the most with food insecurity align almost completely with flare ups of my own health conditions, conditions that place many limits on the foods I can eat. And yet during those moments I have less control over food access, which has resulted in longer flares and more instability.

PO Box 1807 • 3121 Hotel Road • Auburn, ME 04211 • Tel: 207-782-3554 • Fax: 207-782-9893 • feedingmaine.org





Of those who access hunger relief in our state 87% of households include a child, senior, or disabled person. My family includes children and people with disabilities, both of which makes maintaining housing a significant challenge. Since my oldest was born, in 2010, we have moved 9 times, with housing costs ranging from 33% to 75% of our household income at any given time during those years. As I have shared in previous testimonies, I am lucky, my experience with homelessness hasn't been chronic, like it is for so many others.

Those who are are chronically resource deprived of food and/or housing need the stability and feeling of abundance necessary to tap into their own personal resiliency. The Housing First Fund will provide that stability for those experiencing chronic homelessness, giving them a chance to show themselves and others the resiliency that has been used for so long to survive being chronically unhoused.

We at Good Shepherd support the this bill.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.

Sincerely,

Rebekah Lane
Community Organizer
rlane@gsfb.org
207-577-6656