



## Maine Education Association

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### Testimony

### In Support

**LD 1422: An Act to End Homelessness and Assist Students Who Are Homeless by Establishing a Housing Voucher Program and Providing Site-Based Housing Services**

**Rachelle Bristol – Executive Director, Maine Education Association**

**Before the Housing Committee**

**April 14, 2023**

Senator Pierce, Representative Gere and esteemed members of the Housing Committee,

My name is Rachelle Bristol (she/her), and I am proud to serve as the Executive Director for the Maine Education Association (MEA). The MEA represents 24,000 educators in the state of Maine, including teachers and other professionals in nearly every public school in the state and faculty and other professional staff in the University of Maine and Community College Systems.

I offer testimony in support of LD 1422, *An Act to End Homelessness and Assist Students Who Are Homeless by Establishing a Housing Voucher Program and Providing Site-Based Housing Services*.

It is not news that for children to learn that they need to have their basic needs met – food, shelter, safety, etc. There are too many children in Maine that do not have those basic needs met and struggle daily. We must do more to provide as much stability as we can as a society to the most vulnerable among us – our children.

Housing insecurity is particularly troubling given the fear that these students must feel when they do not know where they will sleep that night or if they will even be with their parents. Seventeen percent of the more than 2,000 homeless youth in Maine are not in the physical control of their parents according to the National Center for Homeless Education, and according to the Maine Department of Education, Maine registered 2,186 homeless students in 2023, up from 1,457 in 2022 and 1,355 in 2021.

This is a trend we do not want to continue.

LD 1422 would provide a starting place to address this growing problem in our society and state. Providing vouchers and dedicated sites to provide housing for homeless students would be a step in the right direction. It is not the entire remedy, but an important move towards a more global solution.

Thank you.

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