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Dear members of the Health & Human Services Committee-

I am writing in support of LD 1426, An Act to Secure Housing for the Most Vulnerable Maine Residents by Amending the Laws Governing Municipal General Assistance.

As the director of Fair Tide, a nonprofit supporting people experiencing homelessness in the southern part of our state, I see the impacts of the affordable housing crisis first-hand. Addressing this pervasive and complex issue requires access to multiple tools. General Assistance is one important resource that is frequently utilized to help a household find stability, and, in turn, strengthen entire communities.

The changes proposed in LD 1426 would fortify the program such that local municipalities bear a smaller portion of the burden of addressing what is truly a statewide crisis. It allows for financial support directed to administrators of the General Assistance program so we can ensure these individuals are informed, educated and dedicated to the highest and most effective level of service. This bill also rectifies the mis-match between real rental costs and the G.A. maximums. Finally, reducing the frequency of income certifications for recipients of ongoing G.A. rental support removes undue barriers and allows households to find the true stability necessary for success.

I sincerely appreciate your consideration of this bill which will have lasting positive impact on many of our struggling Mainers.

Thank you,

Emily Flinkstrom, MSW
Executive Director

A long-term solution to homelessness