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Maine Community Action Partnership Supports LD 2138 Resolve, to Improve Funding for Homeless Shelters

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Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, members of the Committee on Housing, I am Megan Hannan, Executive Director of the Maine Community Action Partnership, the membership organization of the ten community action agencies in Maine, and we support LD 2138 Resolve, to Improve Funding for Homeless Shelters.

Our state's greatest resource is our people, and our state's policies shape people's possibilities. In Community Action, we create conditions that invite children to learn and adults to apply their skills, tapping into the deep-rooted potential in our communities. Through our Whole Family approach, we build a family's capacity for sustained stability and economic growth. We invest in the family's well-being, we let them drive their own story, and we have tangible success.

Despite that, Maine rents are too high for most low- and middle-income Mainers. Households with very low incomes are facing eviction at a much higher rate than others, and those with children are in even higher risk situations. Poverty, unstable housing and lack of support are a recipe for adverse childhood events (ACEs) that follow children for the rest of their lives.

And we find our communities, especially larger communities, are filled with individuals and families who have had to leave their homes, for whatever reason, often failure to keep up with rent. And where do they, where can they, go? There are not enough shelters or beds for the need; there are not enough low barrier, fully staffed with qualified mental, physical and emotional care workers or employments coaches to really help people move past where they find themselves to where they wish to be.

As a state, we must prioritize funding our low-barrier shelters, allowing them to close due to lack of funds will make the problem for those communities, for all of Maine, even worse. As we look at all of the solutions we are putting in place, the need for low-barrier shelters with appropriate medical care for unhoused persons with substance use disorder, or mental health disorders, or who are elderly or with disabilities.

Thank you for your time and attention, I am happy to answer your questions if I can.

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