



CITY OF BANGOR

Joint Select Committee on Housing

Testimony in support of LD 2138 – “Resolve, to Improve Funding for Homeless Shelters.”

January 23, 2024

Senator Pierce, Senator Vitelli, Senator Pouliot and members of the Joint Select Committee on Housing, my name is Cara Pelletier, and I am Council Chair of the Bangor City Council. I am here today to provide testimony on behalf of the City of Bangor in support of LD 2138, Resolve, to Improve Funding for Homeless Shelter.

The Hope House has been a long-standing and important community asset within the City of Bangor. It is the only low-barrier shelter north of Waterville. They serve those facing significant challenges, such as acute mental illness, substance use disorder, and severe physical health problems. Specifically, the Hope House Health Center provides shelter, medical and mental health services, and on-site transitional housing – all of which are vital services to those who need it most.

The City of Bangor believes LD 2138 is a step in the right direction to better supporting the five low-barrier shelters in our state, including the Hope House.

Over the past year, the City of Bangor has allocated more than \$9 million in ARPA funds to tackle the multifaceted challenges of housing, homelessness, substance use disorder, and recovery, including more than \$2 million dollars in direct aid to the Hope House.

Despite our substantial investment, the demand for shelter beds persists, highlighting the urgency of additional resources to build sustainable capacity.

Bangor, as a service center for the northern half of the state of Maine, plays a crucial role in providing essential services to our state’s unhoused residents. The scope of the issue exceeds the capacity of our one community alone. Bangor’s ARPA funds are a good start, but they are insufficient to meet the ongoing needs of an entire region.

The challenges faced by those experiencing homelessness are complex and multifaceted, requiring a collaborative and comprehensive approach.

LD 2138 represents a vital step in the right direction, acknowledging the ongoing need for increased funding to support homeless shelters. Increasing the overnight bed rate reimbursement and directing the Department of Health and Human Services to pursue a waiver to access Medicaid funds, means the low-barrier shelters will be able to continue to provide much needed resources while creating a path for sustainable, ongoing financial support to this very important community resource and opportunities for individuals seeking to transition out of homelessness.

With the full support of the Bangor City Council, I urge you to pass LD 2138. Thank you for your consideration, and please do not hesitate to reach out with questions.

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