

Aspen Ruhlin
Bucksport
LD 2138

I would like to begin by thanking the chairs Senator Pierce and Representative Gere along with the rest of the Housing Committee. I would also like to thank Representative Madigan for sponsoring this bill. My name is Aspen Ruhlin, and I am a resident of Bucksport. Today, I am here to urge members of this committee to vote in support of LD 2138 and to take better care of our unhoused neighbors.

I still work in Bangor, and up until a year ago I had been a resident there for many years. I have always lived in the Bangor area, and while we lack some of the amenities of southern Maine, namely Trader Joe's, I wouldn't trade it for a thing. There is one resource in Bangor that is lacking, however: support for our unhoused neighbors. This is not an issue unique to our area, but it is one that is particularly underserved. Given our lower population density, there's often the assumption that we don't need these supports as desperately, when the reality is that Bangor is a hub of resources in the area, from hospitals to shelters to food pantries. It is not possible to overstate how desperately we are in need of increased funding for low barrier shelters for unhoused people. Without this increased funding, we are likely to lose the only low-barrier shelter in a city that already doesn't have enough beds.

Every single member of this legislature is closer to being unhoused and in need of the very services this bill seeks to fund than they likely realize. Homelessness is a policy failure, not an individual moral one, and increasing funding for low barrier shelters is one of many essential steps to meaningfully address our homelessness and housing crisis in Maine.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 2138 today.