



**TESTIMONY OF GLBTQ LEGAL ADVOCATES & DEFENDERS IN SUPPORT OF
LD 193, AN ACT TO FUND STUDENTS IN MAINE SCHOOLS WHO ARE
EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS**

Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs
February 26, 2025

Dear Senate Chair Rafferty, House Chair Murphy, and Distinguished Members of the Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs,

GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD Law) is a nonprofit legal organization that works in New England and nationally to create a just society free of discrimination based on gender identity and expression, HIV status, and sexual orientation. We appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony in Support of LD 193, An Act to Fund Students in Maine Schools Who Are Experiencing Homelessness.

In the 2023 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey, 2.6 percent of high school respondents reported experiencing housing instability in the previous 30 days alone.¹ Rates were higher for students of color and for LGBTQ students.²

While these students represent a small overall percentage of the student population in Maine, many of them experience heightened needs and barriers to accessing education. Students experiencing homelessness have a higher rate of chronic absenteeism than their peers, with national data showing a rate of 48 percent.³ And they have a lower graduation rate than their peers – just 60 percent of Maine students experiencing homelessness graduated high school in four years, compared to 86 percent of all students.⁴ That lower graduation rate in turn puts young people at greater risk of homelessness later in life, underscoring the important role that obtaining education plays in supporting economic wellbeing.⁵ Young people who are not in school can also have interactions with law enforcement and become involved with the juvenile justice system.

¹ Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) & Maine Department of Education (DOE), *Maine: 2023 MIYHS High School Report* 949,

https://www.maine.gov/miyhs/sites/default/files/2023_Reports/Detailed_Reports/HS/MIYHS2023_Detailed_Reports_HS_State/Maine%20High%20School%20Detailed%20Tables.pdf

² *Id.* at 950-51.

³³ School House Connection, *2025 Fact Sheet: Educating Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness 2* (2025), <https://schoolhouseconnection.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Educating-Children-and-Youth-Experiencing-Homelessness-2025-Fact-Sheet.pdf>.

⁴ Maine Children's Alliance, *2023 Maine Kids Count* 43, https://mainechildrensalliance.org/site/assets/files/2024/2023_kidscount_databook_interactive.pdf.

⁵ School House Connection, *2025 Fact Sheet: Educating Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness 2* (2025), <https://schoolhouseconnection.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Educating-Children-and-Youth-Experiencing-Homelessness-2025-Fact-Sheet.pdf>.

There are a range of actions schools can take to promote educational attainment and the overall health and wellbeing of students experiencing homelessness. While the federal McKinney-Vento Act establishes some measures that districts must take to support these students, such as ensuring transportation, permitting student enrollment even without required documents, and designating a homeless education liaison, the Act is insufficient to ensure that students in housing crisis can consistently attend and succeed in school.

This bill would help to address that gap by increasing the funding available to schools for each student experiencing homelessness in the school population. Schools are essential both in delivering services that help meet the immediate needs of students experiencing homelessness and setting them up for stability and success in the future – but they cannot do so without sufficient resources. Accordingly, GLAD Law strongly supports this bill.

Sincerely,

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