



CITY OF BANGOR

Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Testimony in Support of LD 193 – “An Act to Fund Students in Maine Schools Who Are Experiencing Homelessness”

Feb. 26, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, I am Cara Pelletier, City Council Chair for the City of Bangor, and I am providing testimony in support of LD 193, “An Act to Fund Students in Maine Schools Who Are Experiencing Homelessness.”

Across Maine, more communities are seeing residents unable to find a permanent place to live, largely because of the affordable housing crisis, and our schools sit on the front lines of this challenge.

During the last school year, more than 4,000 Maine students lacked a fixed place to live each night – doubled-up with friends or staying in a hotel. Every day our staff see more students enter class without basic items like clean clothes, hygiene products and school supplies.

It’s heartening to see that the Legislature has taken steps to tackle this growing challenge. The recent pilot program sponsored by Sen. Rafferty to provide up to \$750 per student for emergency financial assistance gave Maine schools a valuable tool to help prevent homelessness. But if we want to provide students with the resources to truly succeed, we know more funding is needed.

One of the primary goals of schools statewide is to provide educational stability to children experiencing homelessness, even if their living situation changes. If a student is forced to move from one town to the next, districts work to help them remain at their current school. To do this, our districts sometimes transport students an hour or more each way to the school in their former town.

Our school leaders are committed to this work, but it is expensive. One superintendent in the region estimates their district spends about \$1,200 per day in dedicated transportation costs for these students. The state does not help cover these expenses, and only a small amount is covered by the federal government. LD 193 would provide meaningful funding to assist our districts with these costs.

Schools across Maine have also developed an array of wraparound services to help McKinney-Vento students succeed. For instance, educators and social workers help children and families navigate a maze of government bureaucracy to obtain basic social supports, like health insurance and SNAP benefits. This kind of support helps them get to graduation.

On behalf of the Bangor City Council, the Bangor School Department and City residents, we urge you to pass LD 193 to address the growing strain on school budgets as we work to provide the resources needed to serve our homeless student population.

Cara Pelletier, City Council Chair, cara.pelletier@bangormaine.gov
Debbie Laurie, City Manager, debbie.laurie@bangormaine.gov