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Testimony In Opposition to a Certain Provision of L.D. 210

FEBRUARY 26, 2025 – Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Ingwersen, and Representative Meyer and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Amanda Gilliam, Vice President of Property Management & Resident Services at Avesta Housing. I'm here today to offer our organization's opposition to proposed language from Part S in the original introduction of the supplemental budget, which is now being proposed in the biennial budget.

Avesta Housing is the largest nonprofit developer of affordable housing in northern New England. We own and manage 3,100 homes which provide a safe, affordable place to live for over 4,600 residents. More than 40 percent of our 4,200 residents in Maine are over the age of 55 and the median household income of these residents is \$19,735.

As outlined by the Department of Health and Human Services in its testimony, "Language submitted in the FY25 supplemental language document on page 11L, Part S, limits housing assistance under the General Assistance Program to a maximum of 3 months in a 12-month period per household." The proposed initiative regarding General Assistance (GA) will likely result in approximately 75 households in Avesta apartments losing the ability to pay for their housing. While residents of all ages utilize GA, the Avesta property with the highest utilization in 2024 is an older adult property. As is the case with any owner of rental housing, Avesta needs relative certainty that residents will have the means to pay rent during the leasing period. Residents who are relying on GA to cover housing expenses are already vulnerable. Eliminating their ability to cover rent would put them at risk of homelessness, which, in turn, results in costs to municipalities and the state.

For these reasons, Avesta Housing requests the committee re-examine the proposed initiative around GA to ensure it aligns with typical lease agreements and does not exacerbate Maine's housing crisis. Thank you for your consideration of our testimony. I am happy to answer any questions.

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