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*Testimony of Rep. Kristen Cloutier in support of*  
**LD 731, An Act to Prohibit Municipalities from Barring the Creation of  
Homeless Shelters**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government*

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury and distinguished members of the State and Local Government Committee, my name is Kristen Cloutier, and I represent House District 94, which includes part of my hometown of Lewiston. I am submitting this testimony in support of **LD 731, An Act to Prohibit Municipalities from Barring the Creation of Homeless Shelters.**

LD 731 and a similar bill submitted by Rep. Lookner in the 131st Legislature are responses to Lewiston's decision three years ago to pass a six-month moratorium on new shelters. Like other service-center communities in Maine, Lewiston has struggled to find solutions to address the growing number of unhoused people needing emergency or transitional shelter.

During a time when housing is scarce and unhoused Mainers continue to struggle, we must pursue solutions that ensure our community members have a warm, safe place to rest at night. Passing moratoria, such as the one enacted in Lewiston, not only fails to address the problem but also places pressure on surrounding cities and towns to house those who cannot find shelter in Lewiston. This approach fails to address the root causes of homelessness.

Shelters serve as critical emergency resources for those experiencing homelessness. We need this response available throughout the state of Maine to effectively address this crisis.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill.