

Testimony in Support of LD 698
David Sovetsky
Chief Program Officer, Mid Maine Homeless Shelter and Services

Chairpersons, distinguished members of the committee, and fellow advocates,

I write to you today to urge your approval of LD 698. As the Chief Program Officer of Mid Maine Homeless Shelter and Services, I have the privilege of supporting an extraordinary team of dedicated professionals who work tirelessly to address homelessness in our community. These individuals are not only skilled and compassionate, but they also embody patience with those who need support and patience with the broader community as we work to bridge gaps in understanding and resources.

However, what they should not have to exercise patience for is access to the resources they need to do their jobs effectively. The staff at our shelter are not just caretakers; they are lifesavers. Every week, they reverse overdoses, provide emergency support, serve meals, and offer a safe place for individuals who have nowhere else to turn. They build relationships and restore dignity for people who often feel invisible. They work with individuals facing significant barriers, including mental health challenges, substance use disorders, lack of access to medical care, and vocational and family instability. And they do all of this 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

LD 698 represents a critical opportunity to sustain the essential work of shelters like ours. Our 62-bed, low-barrier shelter in Central Maine is a cornerstone of the community, providing not just emergency shelter but long-term solutions to help people rebuild their lives. Without this funding, we face difficult decisions that will directly impact the well-being of both our staff and our guests. If we are forced to reduce staffing levels, going from three staff members per shift to just two—this could have dire consequences. For a team responsible for the safety and well-being of more than 60 individuals in crisis at any given time, that reduction in capacity can mean the difference between preventing an overdose or not, between de-escalating a crisis or not, between someone making it through another night safely or not.

Our commitment to being a low-barrier shelter and practicing harm reduction means that we welcome everyone, regardless of their circumstances. In the colder months, when the risk of exposure and death increases, we enforce a no-turn-away policy. Our numbers surge close to 100 guests during these times—individuals who, without our support, would be left out in the elements. We do not take this responsibility lightly, and we cannot do it alone.

This funding is not just about keeping our doors open, it is about ensuring that we have the resources to continue doing this life-saving work effectively and safely. Our staff, our guests, and our entire community depend on it.

I urge you to approve LD 698 and stand with those working on the front lines of the homelessness crisis. The lives of the most vulnerable members of our community depend on it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

David Sovetsky
Winslow / Mid Maine Homeless Shelter and Services
LD 698

Testimony in Support of LD 698

David Sovetsky

Chief Program Officer, Mid Maine Homeless Shelter and Services

Chairpersons, distinguished members of the committee, and fellow advocates, I write to you today to urge your approval of LD 698. As the Chief Program Officer of Mid Maine Homeless Shelter and Services, I have the privilege of supporting an extraordinary team of dedicated professionals who work tirelessly to address homelessness in our community. These individuals are not only skilled and compassionate, but they also embody patience with those who need support and patience with the broader community as we work to bridge gaps in understanding and resources.

However, what they should not have to exercise patience for is access to the resources they need to do their jobs effectively. The staff at our shelter are not just caretakers; they are lifesavers. Every week, they reverse overdoses, provide emergency support, serve meals, and offer a safe place for individuals who have nowhere else to turn. They build relationships and restore dignity for people who often feel invisible. They work with individuals facing significant barriers, including mental health challenges, substance use disorders, lack of access to medical care, and vocational and family instability. And they do all of this 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

LD 698 represents a critical opportunity to sustain the essential work of shelters like ours. Our 62-bed, low-barrier shelter in Central Maine is a cornerstone of the community, providing not just emergency shelter but long-term solutions to help people rebuild their lives. Without this funding, we face difficult decisions that will directly impact the well-being of both our staff and our guests. If we are forced to reduce staffing levels, going from three staff members per shift to just two—this could have dire consequences. For a team responsible for the safety and well-being of more than 60 individuals in crisis at any given time, that reduction in capacity can mean the difference between preventing an overdose or not, between de-escalating a crisis or not, between someone making it through another night safely or not. Our commitment to being a low-barrier shelter and practicing harm reduction means that we welcome everyone, regardless of their circumstances. In the colder months, when the risk of exposure and death increases, we enforce a no-turn-away policy. Our numbers surge close to 100 guests during these times—individuals who, without our support, would be left out in the elements. We do not take this responsibility lightly, and we cannot do it alone.

This funding is not just about keeping our doors open, it is about ensuring that we have the resources to continue doing this life-saving work effectively and safely. Our staff, our guests, and our entire community depend on it.

I urge you to approve LD 698 and stand with those working on the front lines of the homelessness crisis. The lives of the most vulnerable members of our community depend on it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.