



**Testimony
 In Support of
 LD 747: An Act to Provide Funds to Reduce Student Homelessness
 March 18, 2025**

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and other members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development,

My name is Mallory Cook, and I have the pleasure of serving the nearly 24,000 members of the Maine Education Association as the Director of Training and Early Educator Engagement. I am here today to testify in support of LD 747: An Act to Provide Funds to Reduce Student Homelessness.

During a recent meeting of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, I presented the table below, highlighting the significant increase in the number of homeless students in the Biddeford School Department. Observing the evolution of Biddeford’s shifting demographics over time, it becomes clear why this bill is essential. And this concern is not just a concern in Biddeford. According to the Department of Education’s ESSA dashboard, the number of students experiencing homelessness in Maine has increased by over 2,100 since 2017.

Biddeford							
School-Year	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Students Experiencing Homelessness in Biddeford (ESSA Dashboard)	25 (1%)	50 (2.1%)	59 (2.5%)	44 (1.9%)	55 (2.4)	68 (2.9)	153 (6.4%)
State of Maine							
School-Year	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Students Experiencing Homelessness (ESSA Dashboard)	1,867 (1.1%)	2,005 (1.1%)	1,782 (1%)	1,646 (1%)	2,317 (1.4%)	3,269 (1.9%)	4,028 (2.4%)

As a former educator, I know that many of the children reflected in those numbers will not see the same school system for the full year. Some are lucky to make it a few months without interruption. This high mobility has a significant impact on their learning; Maine is committed to local control in our schools; therefore, curriculum, pacing, supports, staffing, and culture can look vastly different from one school to another just down the road. Considering this, it is no surprise that homeless students are 87% more likely

to drop out of school than their peers with stable housing conditions. Investment in this program is an investment in the safety, stability, and continuity of education for these students.

During a discussion about the utilization of these funds after the first year of implementation, a superintendent recounted how he successfully used the program to secure a deposit on an apartment for a homeless family in his district. He emphasized that the process was straightforward, and that the family would not have been able to achieve this without the financial assistance provided. We are confident that other McKinney-Vento Liaisons across the state have similar anecdotes. We strongly urge the committee to support this bill, ensuring that other families can benefit from similar opportunities.