

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF LD 698
AN ACT TO SUSTAIN EMERGENCY HOMELESS SHELTERS IN MAINE
Tuesday, March 18, 2025**

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and the esteemed members of the Committee on Housing and Economic Development. My name is Carter Friend and I am the CEO of York County Community Action. Our mission is to ensure that all people in York County thrive. We work with our partners to meet urgent needs, create opportunities to succeed, promote well-being, and advocate for just policies and practices. We strongly support LD 698, *An Act to Sustain Emergency Homeless Shelters in Maine*.

YCCAC is both a Community Action Agency and a Community Health Center. We have seen a dramatic increase in the number of clients and patients who are homeless or at high risk of homelessness. Nasson Health Care, our community health center, is a healthcare for the homeless provider. Last year, 1584 Nasson patients reported that they had experienced a period of homelessness within the past 12 months.

York County's emergency shelters are a vital resource for these and other members of our community. In York County we have one adult emergency shelter, one family emergency shelter and one domestic violence emergency shelter (these programs are run by two Emergency Shelter and Housing Assistance Program (ESHAP) providers). York County emergency shelters operate at full capacity, and they provide critical services such as substance use disorder treatment, case management and housing.

Yet emergency shelters do not receive the funding they need to sustain operations. The average cost to provide a bed night of shelter and associated services in Maine is \$102 per person/per night across all ESHAP shelters. Currently, Maine's emergency shelters receive \$7.16 per person/per night from the operations share of ESHAP funding, which leaves 93% of costs to be raised from other sources. This is unsustainable and has created a real risk that multiple shelters across the state will close. LD 698 would increase this funding to \$19 per person/per night.

It is also important to highlight the critical role emergency shelters play in the Housing Continuum. Partners in York County work closely together every day to address homelessness. We have found that in order to be successful, we must address every part of the Housing Continuum – from prevention, to emergency shelter, to housing, and ultimately to homeownership. Emergency Shelters are a lynchpin of the continuum, helping people who are homeless meet their immediate need of safe shelter, and providing them with assistance and support to help them move along the continuum.

For these reasons, York County Community Action strongly urges you to support the passage of LD 698. Thank you for the hard work you do on behalf of Mainers.

Carter Friend, CEO
York County Community Action Corporation