

Mathew Higgins-Dufour
Augusta
LD 698

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and esteemed members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee,

My name is Mathew Higgins-Dufour, and I am an employee of Waterville, Maine.

I am writing to express my strong support for LD 698: An Act to Sustain Emergency Homeless Shelters in Maine. As a homeless case manager, the resource to those who are most vulnerable is crucial to long-term wellbeing of those who are served by shelters.

Emergency shelters in Maine provide essential care and services to individuals and families in crisis. However, as homelessness continues to rise across the state, shelters are struggling to keep up with demand. Many are forced to turn people away, leaving them with no choice but to sleep outside or in unsafe conditions. If even one shelter closes, it will place an overwhelming strain on an already stretched system, forcing more people to compete for limited resources like shelter beds, housing assistance, and life-saving support services.

According to MaineHousing, it costs \$102 per night to operate a single shelter bed in Maine, yet the state's Shelter Operating Subsidy has remained at just \$7 per bed per night since 2016. Over the years, shelters have faced rising costs due to inflation and expanded their services to meet the growing need—especially during the pandemic. LD 698 would increase the subsidy to \$18 per bed per night, providing critical funding to keep emergency shelters open, staffed, and accessible to those who need them most.

Maine must invest in safe, sustainable emergency shelters to support individuals and families experiencing homelessness. LD 698 is a necessary step toward making that a reality.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Mathew Higgins-Dufour