



State of Maine - 132nd Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development
Testimony of Dr. Jay Reynolds on behalf of Northern Light AR Gould Hospital
(Presque Isle, Maine) - March 18, 2025

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Supporting: LD698, "An Act to Sustain Emergency Homeless Shelters in Maine"

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

My name is Dr. Jay Reynolds, and I am the president of Northern Light AR Gould Hospital in Presque Isle. I am testifying on behalf of my organization in support of this legislation. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of LD698, An Act to Sustain Emergency Homeless Shelters in Maine.

Like any hospital, our emergency department is open 24-hours a day, 7-days a week. We interact with homeless individuals regularly, typically because they have been brought in by the police or by staff from the homeless shelter for a medical or behavioral health need. We are grateful that we have a local homeless shelter that we can typically discharge them to when their care is complete. However, at times they cannot go to the shelter – because it is full or because they are temporarily or permanently banned for behavioral issues. In cases where they have nowhere else to go, particularly on cold winter nights, we have allowed them to sleep in a waiting room. But this is a stop gap measure and not a solution.

Hospital emergency departments like ours are already regularly pushed beyond capacity. We often have patients with medical or behavioral health needs who end up in our ED for prolonged periods of times while waiting for a bed to become available in an appropriate facility, either here or elsewhere. This means less beds are available for patients waiting to be seen for an emergent issue, resulting in a backlog in our waiting room. We are struggling to meet patient needs as it is, we do not have the ability to become a regular place for the homeless to sleep, which I fear is what will happen should our local shelter close. Just as significantly, we cannot provide the support services they receive in the shelter.

Please vote Ought to Pass on LD698, so Maine's hospitals such as ours can focus on our mission of improving the health of the people and communities we serve.

Thank you for your consideration.

Dr. Jay Reynolds, President