



TESTIMONY OF ALICIA REA, ESQ.  
LD 731 – Ought to Pass

**An Act to Prohibit Municipalities from Barring  
the Creation of Homeless Shelters**

Joint Standing Committee on  
State & Local Government  
March 19, 2025

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Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government, greetings. My name is Alicia Rea and I am a policy fellow at the ACLU of Maine, a statewide organization committed to advancing and preserving civil liberties guaranteed by the Maine and U.S. Constitutions. On behalf of our members, I urge you to support LD 731.

If enacted, this bill would prohibit municipalities from adopting moratoria on the establishment of shelters for persons experiencing homelessness.

According to Maine Housing, homelessness in Maine has more than doubled in the past decade, from 1,200 people in 2014 to 2,695 people in 2024.<sup>1</sup> In addition to more clients who need services, the funding model for these shelters means operating with an annual deficit of approximately \$4 million.<sup>2</sup> Experts agree that more is needed from all government authorities.<sup>3</sup> Maine lacks enough shelters, and a shelter shortage increases burdens for jails and prisons, law enforcement agencies, and hospitals.

In addition, a lack of shelters could mean unconstitutional deprivations of the civil rights and civil liberties of unhoused people forced to live outside, such as forcible displacement in violation of due process, disability discrimination, and infringement on First Amendment rights.

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<sup>1</sup> MaineHousing, Maine State Housing Authority, *2024 Point in Time Count*, available at [https://mainehousing.org/docs/default-source/policy-research/research-reports/homeless-reports/2024-point-in-time-report.pdf?sfvrsn=85d69e15\\_3](https://mainehousing.org/docs/default-source/policy-research/research-reports/homeless-reports/2024-point-in-time-report.pdf?sfvrsn=85d69e15_3).

<sup>2</sup> See Nicole Ogrysko, *Maine's private low-barrier homeless shelters are close to financial breaking point*, Maine Public, Dec. 5, 2023, available at <https://www.mainepublic.org/maine/2023-12-05/maines-private-low-barrier-homeless-shelters-are-close-to-financial-breaking-point>; Rachel Ohm, *Maine homeless shelters warn of financial crisis Six shelters around the state are facing a collective shortfall of about \$4.1 million and at least one is in danger of closing*, Press Herald, Dec. 6, 2023, available at <https://www.pressherald.com/2023/12/05/homeless-shelters-in-maine-face-dire-funding-challenges/>.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*



This bill promises to remove one barrier to building shelters. We urge you to vote ought to pass.