



**TESTIMONY OF GLBTQ LEGAL ADVOCATES & DEFENDERS  
IN SUPPORT OF  
LD 384, AN ACT TO PREVENT STUDENT HOMELESSNESS**  
Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs  
March 19, 2025

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Distinguished Members of the Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs,

GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD Law) is a nonprofit legal organization that works in New England and nationally to create a just society free of discrimination based on gender identity and expression, HIV status, and sexual orientation. We appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony in Support of LD 384, An Act to Prevent Student Homelessness.

As GLAD Law shared in our testimony in support of LD 193, in the 2023 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey, 2.6 percent of high school respondents reported experiencing housing instability in the previous 30 days alone.<sup>1</sup> Rates were higher for students of color and for LGBTQ students.<sup>2</sup>

While these students represent a small overall percentage of the student population in Maine, many of them experience heightened needs and barriers to accessing education. Students experiencing homelessness have a higher rate of chronic absenteeism than their peers, with national data showing a rate of 48 percent.<sup>3</sup> And they have a lower graduation rate than their peers – just 60 percent of Maine students experiencing homelessness graduated high school in four years, compared to 86 percent of all students.<sup>4</sup> That lower graduation rate in turn puts young people at greater risk of homelessness later in life, underscoring the important role education plays in supporting economic wellbeing.<sup>5</sup> Young people who are not in school can also have interactions with law enforcement and become involved with the juvenile justice system.

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<sup>1</sup> Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) & Maine Department of Education (DOE), *Maine: 2023 MIYHS High School Report* 949, [https://www.maine.gov/miyhs/sites/default/files/2023\\_Reports/Detailed\\_Reports/HS/MIYHS2023\\_Detailed\\_Report\\_HS\\_State/Maine%20High%20School%20Detailed%20Tables.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/miyhs/sites/default/files/2023_Reports/Detailed_Reports/HS/MIYHS2023_Detailed_Report_HS_State/Maine%20High%20School%20Detailed%20Tables.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* at 950-51.

<sup>33</sup> School House Connection, *2025 Fact Sheet: Educating Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness 2* (2025), <https://schoolhouseconnection.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Educating-Children-and-Youth-Experiencing-Homelessness-2025-Fact-Sheet.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Maine Children's Alliance, *2023 Maine Kids Count* 43, [https://mainechildrensalliance.org/site/assets/files/2024/2023\\_kidscount\\_databook\\_interactive.pdf](https://mainechildrensalliance.org/site/assets/files/2024/2023_kidscount_databook_interactive.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> School House Connection, *2025 Fact Sheet: Educating Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness 2* (2025), <https://schoolhouseconnection.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Educating-Children-and-Youth-Experiencing-Homelessness-2025-Fact-Sheet.pdf>.

Schools can play a powerful role in supporting children and families. And research suggests that even a one-time cash transfer to people facing a crisis makes them significantly less likely to lose housing.<sup>6</sup> By creating a mechanism for providing a modest amount of funds to families of students at risk of homelessness, LD 384 would help keep students in school and focused on learning. Accordingly, GLAD Law respectfully asks members of this committee to support this bill.

Sincerely,

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Staff Attorney

Sarah Austin  
Staff Attorney

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<sup>6</sup> William N. Evans, James X. Sullivan, and Melanie Wallskog, *The Impact of Homelessness Prevention Programs on Homelessness*, 353 Science 694 (2016).