



Maine Education Association

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Testimony In Support of **LD 384: An Act to Prevent Student Homelessness** March 19, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and other members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

My name is Mallory Cook, and I have the pleasure of serving the nearly 24,000 members of the Maine Education Association as the Director of Training and Early Educator Engagement. I am here today to testify in support of *LD 384: An Act to Prevent Student Homelessness*.

Yesterday, MEA stood before the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development to advocate for Representative Brennan's bill, *LD 747: An Act to Fund Students in Maine Who Are Experiencing Homelessness*. In our testimony, we emphasized our deep concerns about the increasing number of students in Maine facing homelessness. While Representative Brennan's bill aims to provide rental assistance to ensure stable housing for students, the funds in Senator Rafferty's bill can be used for rental assistance, utilities, essential home repairs, and other support to prevent homelessness and to maintain consistent housing.

State of Maine							
School-Year	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Students Experiencing Homelessness (ESSA Dashboard)	1,867 (1.1%)	2,005 (1.1%)	1,782 (1%)	1,646 (1%)	2,317 (1.4%)	3,269 (1.9%)	4,028 (2.4%)

While the number of students experiencing homelessness paints a critical picture, the significant number of economically disadvantaged students further underscores the need for this bill in our state. Although the numbers appear to have decreased over time, this is likely a reflection of our state's free universal meals program. As a result, fewer families are submitting the Free/Reduced Lunch program forms, which means their incomes are no longer being recorded within the program guidelines. Those reflected in these numbers and those who are not but are experiencing economic hardship and at-risk of homelessness have much to gain from the \$750 per year afforded to them in this legislation. According to a 2020 Maine Housing Coalition Report, in a vast majority of Maine evictions, tenants were behind by two months or less and owed between \$1,000 and \$1,500. This same report noted that evictions come with court records, can cause job stress which can lead to dismissal, furthering economic hardship, and can lead to anxiety and depression. Maintenance of stable housing and continuity in school placement is critical for a student's safety and social and emotional well-being. For these reasons, we urge the committee to vote "ought to pass" on this bill. (Main Housing Coalition, 2020)

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State of Maine							
School-Year	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Students Who are Economically Disadvantaged	77,712 (43.5%)	75,379 (42.3%)	72,735 (40.7%)	63,421 (37.3%)	60,077 (35.1%)	62,444 (36.1%)	64,105 (37.5%)

Maine Housing Coalition. (2020). *Evictions in Maine: An Analysis of Eviction Filings and Outcomes as the COVID-19 Pandemic Threatens to Increase Rental Housing Instability*. Retrieved from [Maine Housing Coalition](#).