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## **Maine Mayors Coalition Testimony on LD 384 An Act to Prevent Student Homelessness**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, the Maine Mayors Coalition is providing testimony in support of LD 384, An Act to Prevent Student Homelessness.

The Maine Mayors Coalition is a nonpartisan group representing the mayors of eleven Maine communities – Auburn, Bangor, Biddeford, Lewiston, Portland, Rockland, Saco, Sanford, South Portland, Waterville and Westbrook – and nearly 300,000 residents. The Coalition advocates on behalf of our citizens and municipalities for policies that recognize the vital services Maine cities provide and the positive impact Maine cities have on our state. The Coalition seeks to work in partnership with state and federal elected officials to meet the needs of Maine people.

One of our most important obligations as public officials is to our young people – they are Maine’s future. Ensuring they receive the best education possible prepares them to become thriving members of society.

As you’re well aware, some students face extraordinary challenges in their lives. One such challenge for a growing number of students is not having basic shelter. Over the last few years, municipalities of all sizes have seen more and more students experiencing homelessness.

Among our Coalition members, Lewiston has 420 unhoused students. Auburn reported 234 for the 2023/2024 school year and expects to meet or exceed that number in this school year. Biddeford has 200 unhoused students, South Portland 150, Saco 150 and Westbrook 122. That is close to 1,300 unhoused students in just these six cities. Given fluctuating economic conditions and the state’s lack of affordable housing, we expect these numbers will continue to rise, not fall.

We fully support providing unhoused students and their families with resources and support to maintain stable permanent housing, as proposed in Senator Rafferty’s bill. It would be much more beneficial – for our students, for our cities and for our state – to have them spend their formative years receiving a quality education instead of worrying about their housing situations.

Thank you for your time and attention.