

MAINE SERVICE CENTERS COALITION

60 Community Drive • Augusta, Maine 04330 • (207) 623-8428

Testimony of the Maine Service Centers Coalition LD 384, An Act to Prevent Student Homelessness

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

The Maine Service Centers Coalition, comprised of 26 towns and cities across the state, articulates the importance of healthy and thriving service center communities, advocates for public policy that supports and contributes to the economic and social viability of our communities, and collaborates with municipal officials, legislators, state agencies and nonprofits to pursue quality of life for all who live and work in our state.

As you well know, homelessness continues to be a serious issue across our state. Our service center communities are acutely aware of its impact with so many individuals and families turning to our cities and towns in search of housing. We are especially concerned about the growing number of students in our schools who are experiencing homelessness.

Young people are Maine's greatest asset. It is up to all of us to provide them with the best education possible so they have the opportunity to become thriving members of our communities and our state. Sadly, for more and more young people, their ability to learn is being impeded by their lack of basic shelter.

LD 384 would establish the Student Homelessness Prevention Program within the Department of Education to identify students and their families at risk of homelessness and provide "direct financial assistance to help them maintain stable permanent housing." Access to these funds would give many of the unhoused students we are seeing in our schools the security to focus on their studies rather than where they will be sleeping at night. The impacts would be significant and long lasting for our students whose lives have been upended by homelessness.

Please give every consideration to supporting LD 384. It is a worthwhile investment in Maine's young people as well as in the future of our state.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important housing and education initiative.