

State of Maine - 132nd Legislature Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic
Development Testimony of Zyanya Shorey on behalf Southern Maine Agency on Aging
(Biddeford, Maine) March 28, 2025

Supporting: LD698, “An Act to Sustain Emergency Homeless Shelters in Maine”

Dear Senator Curry, Representative Gere and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development, my name is Zyanya Shorey. I’m a Sabattus resident and the Community Resources Manager at *Southern Maine Agency on Aging*. I’m testifying on behalf of myself and my community in support of this legislation.

My role at *Southern Maine Agency on Aging* is to connect older adults and adults with disabilities of Cumberland and York counties to resources in their area. I have been in this role for over five years and one of our clients' top needs has always been homeless shelters. In the past few years, I have seen a significantly high influx of calls pertaining to clients in need of emergency shelter. What I love about my job is being able to successfully connect clients to available resources. However, when it comes to temporary shelter, my team has to be the bearer of bad news. It is very hard to successfully connect our clients to shelters because they are being turned away since most, if not all, shelters are full, and our vulnerable population is forced to sleep outside and brave Maine’s unpredictable weather because of funding challenges.

Homeless shelters provide not just temporary refuge but also support vital services that help our most vulnerable clients regain stability. It allows time for clients to work with us while applying for permanent housing and connecting them with other resources that may be available to them to make sure they are accessing their most basic needs. Maine shelters are struggling to meet the needs due to the growing homelessness population. Our system is already stretched so thin, and closing shelters will only make a difficult situation even more difficult.

I urge this committee to take action on this bill as our state cannot afford to lose any shelters.

Thank you for your time and consideration on addressing this, as all Mainers deserve to have a safe place to go and to be proud to say as often referred, Maine, “The Way Life Should Be”.

Zyanya Shorey