



Testimony in Support of LD 698, “An Act to Sustain Emergency Homeless Shelters in Maine”

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Housing & Economic Development

Good afternoon Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and the esteemed members of the Committee on Housing and Economic Development. My name is Jared Gay, and I am the Director of Public Policy & Advocacy at the United Way of Southern Maine. This testimony is on behalf of all seven United Ways of Maine. Today, I stand before you to express our strong support for LD 698, An Act to Sustain Emergency Homeless Shelters in Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this critical issue.

United Ways across Maine work to improve financial stability, increase access to affordable housing, and ensure individuals and families have the support they need to thrive. Homelessness disrupts everything—education, employment, health, and well-being. When individuals and families do not have stable housing, it becomes exponentially more difficult to address the root causes of financial instability. Through our partnerships with shelters, service providers, and local communities, we see firsthand the vital role emergency shelters play in preventing crisis situations from escalating further.

Emergency shelters are not just a temporary place to stay—they are a bridge to stability. They provide a safe environment, connect people to resources, and act as a launching point for individuals and families to regain financial security and permanent housing. Without stable and adequately funded shelters, our communities will see increased strain on hospitals, law enforcement, schools, and local businesses, as well as a rise in unsheltered homelessness. Our shared communities rely on a strong shelter network to ensure that individuals and families in crisis have somewhere to turn. If shelters are forced to close due to lack of funding, our ability to support Mainers in need would be severely compromised.

I urge you to support LD 698. This bill will provide crucial funding to keep emergency shelters open and allow organizations like United Ways of Maine to continue our mission—helping individuals and families achieve stability and financial well-being.

Thank you for your time and consideration.