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Good afternoon, Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and Members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee,

My name is Julie Orrego, and I am the Advocacy Supervisor at Preble Street. Preble Street operates 16 programs throughout Maine, and its staff works daily alongside hundreds of individuals and families who struggle with housing insecurity. Our mission is to provide accessible, barrier-free services that empower individuals experiencing challenges related to homelessness, housing, hunger, and poverty and to advocate for solutions to these issues.

Preble Street's Joe Kreisler Teen Shelter is one of only four shelters for homeless youth in Maine. Youth who utilize the Joe Kreisler Teen Shelter connect with caseworkers to meet their basic needs and access other essential services, such as healthcare, employment, housing, and education. Every day, we see the challenges that students experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity face, like moving from one school district to another, living in unsafe conditions, or dealing with unstable family situations. LD747 - An Act to Provide Funds to Reduce Student Homelessness would continue funding a rental assistance program for homeless students in both primary and secondary schools in Maine, making it easier for these students to access stable housing.

The 2024 Point in Time Count found that 19.5% of all households experiencing homelessness had at least one child under 18. According to the [Maine State Housing Authority](#), over eleven proposals totaling almost \$5 million in funding requests were submitted by school districts. These numbers indicate the need to make this program permanent.

Preble Street supports LD747 because it helps ensure that every student can succeed academically, regardless of their housing status. When a student is unhoused, they are balancing a number of academic as well as normative youth development issues. By remedying the housing portion of this equation, this bill would provide critical additional resources and support to help students succeed.

Preble Street encourages you to support this legislation because it invests in a brighter future for young people in our state. Every student deserves the opportunity to reach their full potential without their socioeconomic status holding them back.

Thank you for your consideration.

