



**Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs
In Favor of LD 193 – An Act to Fund Students in Maine Schools Who Are Experiencing
Homelessness**

Greetings, Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs,

My name is Jared Gay, and I am the Director of Public Policy and Advocacy at United Way of Southern Maine (UWSM). Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of LD 193.

United Way of Southern Maine works to ensure that every person in our community has the opportunity to thrive—starting with access to quality education, stable housing, and financial stability. We focus specifically on supporting ALICE households—Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed—families who are working, often multiple jobs, but still cannot afford the basics. Many ALICE families live paycheck to paycheck, just one unexpected expense away from crisis. For these families, housing instability and homelessness are very real threats, and for their children, those challenges follow them into the classroom every day.

LD 193 would provide a modest but critical adjustment to the school funding formula—adding a 0.50 weight for each student identified as experiencing homelessness. For ALICE students and families, this change could make a meaningful difference. It would enable school districts to deliver the supports these students need to succeed—transportation, trauma-informed care, tutoring, case management, and access to food and hygiene supplies.

ALICE children experiencing homelessness are more likely to struggle with attendance, academic performance, and social-emotional wellbeing. They may lack a quiet place to do homework, internet access for virtual learning, or consistent meals outside of school. Educators and schools in our region are doing heroic work to support these students, but they are being asked to do more with less. LD 193 would acknowledge these challenges and equip schools with the funding they need to meet the moment.

This legislation is not only a recognition of the growing number of Maine students experiencing homelessness—it is also a commitment to ensuring that homelessness does

not dictate a child's future. We must invest in the potential of every student, including those who face the steepest odds.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.