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Good morning, 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's mission is to provide accessible, barrier-free services to empower people experiencing problems with homelessness, housing, hunger, and poverty and advocate for solutions to these problems. Preble Street operates 16 programs throughout Maine, and its staff works daily alongside hundreds of individuals and families who struggle with housing insecurity.

Preble Street supports LD 1476, An Act to Support Maine's Homeless Shelters, by Imposing a Fee for Booking Hotels, Short-Term Rentals, and Recreational Vehicle Camping Reservations. This emergency legislation proposes a \$2 fee on the rental of lodging places and recreational vehicle camping sites, effective January 1, 2026. The revenue generated from these fees would be credited directly to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to fund initiatives supporting homeless shelters in Maine.

As you have heard in this session, many shelters face significant funding gaps. They may be forced to scale back operations or close entirely without immediate intervention. This bill could provide a funding stream for LD 698, creating a sustainable funding source to ensure that shelters can continue to operate and meet the needs of our most vulnerable residents.

The proposed \$2 fee represents a modest contribution from the tourism and hospitality sectors, which benefit from the influx of visitors to Maine. By implementing this fee, we ensure that those who profit from our state's appeal also contribute to addressing our communities' challenges.

MaineHousing recently released a [Shelter Cost Study](#) this year, indicating that the average shelter bed costs about \$102 each night. Currently, the state contributes \$7.16 toward the cost of each shelter bed. The income from the proposed \$2 fee would help reduce financial strains on shelters by increasing operational funding and preventing them from closing or reducing the number of beds they can provide.

Maine has experienced a significant increase in the number of individuals and families facing homelessness, placing unprecedented demand on our homeless shelters statewide. According to the [2024 Point in Time \(PIT\) Count](#), 2,695 people were identified as experiencing homelessness in Maine.

Given the urgent nature of the homelessness crisis in Maine, LD 1476 is designated as an emergency measure, allowing it to take effect immediately upon approval. This swift action is necessary to prevent further strain on our shelter systems and to begin addressing the needs of our homeless population without delay.

LD 1476 offers a solution to a pressing issue facing our state. By implementing a fee on lodging and camper reservations, we can generate dedicated funding to support the operation of homeless shelters, ensuring that they can continue to provide essential services to those in need. We urge the committee to pass this legislation.

Thank you for your consideration.

