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Waterville
LD 2124

Without the passage of LD2124 the already insufficient and overburdened shelter system in Maine will greatly weaken and may even collapse. Sadly, the state lost the Alfred shelter last year and we cannot afford to lose another. The Mid-Maine Homeless Shelter in Waterville, which is a low bar shelter and the one I am most familiar with, provides more than beds; it provides critical wrap around services essential to improve mental and physical health and help the unhoused secure and maintain housing, as well as employment, education, and further independence. It has saved numerous lives with its rapid response NARCAN program. These services stabilize the wider community and reduce police and fire services. MMHS also partners with other social welfare services and non-profits, such as my ministry Starfish Village, helping to fill gaps in care, providing case management and housing navigation to non-guests. MMHS also provides our community's only overnight warming shelter. My hope is that the MMHS can expand: I'd like to see it have a sober house, and a separate shelter for parents with minor children. Losing this shelter, which struggles to remain open, would be a catastrophe. This shelter, like all others, needs the security of a permanent funding stream for state funded shelters. Shelters are a crucial thread in the overall social welfare net; they are as critical an emergency service as our police and fire services but have never been seen in that light --and it's time to change that sad fact and LD2124 is an important, civically responsible move in that direction.