

Carolyn Lambert
Kennebunk
LD 2124

Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic
Development

An Act to Support Shelter Funding Using Revenue from the Real Estate Transfer Tax
February 10, 2026

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Carolyn Lambert, I live in Kennebunk, and I am an ordained minister in the Congregational, United Church of Christ. I have been privileged to serve 4 churches in Maine – rural, village churches, as well as a large city church - in 30 years of ordained ministry. I also serve as Chaplain to police, firefighters and EMT's in the community where I live; have served on the Board of Caring Unlimited, the domestic violence program here in York County – working with survivors of domestic violence and their children; and also serve on the Board of the Maine Council of Churches.

Wherever I've served, and in whatever capacity I've served, I've encountered individuals and families who – through no fault of their own – have been unhoused. And I've learned that it only takes one serious illness, one significant accident, or one lost job to push them to live in their cars or – worse - on the streets.

And yet my faith teaches me every single day to love my neighbor as myself and that my neighbor is anyone who is in need. My faith also teaches me that we're called to love kindness, to seek justice and to walk humbly in this world that all people can thrive.

But even here in our remarkable state of Maine, thousands of people don't have access to the resources they need to thrive, including a place to live. In 2024, the Maine State Housing Authority stated that there were 2,695 unhoused individuals, including 1,895 families and 656 children. In my work as a pastor, a chaplain, and even as a mentor for domestic violence survivors, I have personally witnessed the degradation and harm that affects unhoused people. No parent should have to put their child/children to sleep night after night in the back seat of a car; no adult who has survived violence at the hands of a partner or spouse should have to face further degradation and harm because they still don't have a place to live safely; no veteran, who has served this country both proudly and faithfully, should ever find themselves living on the streets they protected; and no child should ever have to go to school without having a safe home because no-one can learn effectively without food in his or her belly or a roof over his or her head.

Here in Maine, one of our most critical resources and safety nets for unhoused individuals and families is our system of emergency homeless shelters. While they don't solve the housing crisis, they do provide a crucial step towards a solution, and they provide an immediate need - a safe place to stay, adequate food and the resources and help individuals and families need in order to find a permanent place to live.

They're staffed by caring and knowledgeable individuals who can connect those in need to the critical resources they require to move them out of homelessness. Not only do shelters save lives, they offer people both support and hope.

In 2025, the York County Adult Shelter here in York County closed due to a lack of funding, leaving our communities without a critical resource, and more families and individuals have been forced to live in harm's way. And without adequate funding, more shelters will close and more people will be unhoused. Therefore, I encourage you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 2124 to ensure that our emergency shelters will remain open and that a critical human need will be met.

Respectfully submitted,
Carolyn Lambert, Kennebunk