



February 17, 2026

Senator Margaret Rotundo
Representative Drew Gattine
Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: LD 2212 – Support for \$1.5M to Emergency Homeless Shelters

Dear Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and members of Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs:

Governor Mills has appointed me as Chair of Maine’s Statewide Homeless Council. The Council was created by state statute to offer information, data, and guidance to the Legislature and Governor regarding homelessness in Maine and our community-based response system.

I am writing today on behalf of the Statewide Homeless Council to express our concern regarding our system of emergency shelters and to **support the Governor’s proposal to offer \$1.5M emergency shelter subsidy in the Supplemental Budget**. This patch to state funding to community shelter agencies is needed until a sustainable policy can be enacted.

The Council meets monthly and is acutely aware of recent shelter closings and the fragile financial state of many agencies offering emergency shelter services. Our state’s current supply of 37 shelter programs with over 1,200 shelter beds is inadequate to meet community needs, resulting in the need for winter warming center services to save lives and prevent harm. While the Council is grateful for the warming center services, these are stop-gap, public health initiatives that don’t result in the positive outcomes of connection to healthcare and referral to permanent housing that shelter teams are able to provide.

The State’s current contribution of \$2.5M to the Emergency Shelter and Housing Assistance (ESHAP) fund is not adequate to meet rising labor and operational costs for shelters. The Governor’s proposed \$1.5M increase to this line item is substantial and essential to effectively support shelters across the state of Maine. Please consider supporting this line item in your deliberations.

Please, reach out to us if you have any questions. We are so grateful for your public service to Maine and the commitment you bring to addressing homelessness in our communities!

Sincerely,

Richard A. Hooks Wayman
Appointed Chair of the Statewide Homeless Council
President & CEO, VOA Northern New England
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