

Testimony in Support of LD 2212: An Act Making Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027

To: Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee

From: Melissa McEntee, Executive Director of Rumford Group Homes, Inc.

Date: February 19, 2026

Dear Members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee,

My name is Melissa McEntee, and I am the Executive Director of Rumford Group Homes, Inc. We are a nonprofit agency located in the western region of Maine. We operate the only three emergency family shelters in Oxford County and one of the only ESHAP funded family shelters in Androscoggin County. I am submitting this written testimony in **support of LD 2212**.

The Governor's proposed allocation is a critical step forward to begin to assist shelter providers in the State of Maine with bridging the continued funding gap for emergency services for our State's most vulnerable citizens. The lack of sustainable shelter funding has caused shelter closures, beginning with York County Shelter services last year and is putting many other shelter providers at risk, including us at Rumford Group Homes.

Shelter providers have been tasked with pursuing funding solutions that are sustainable and sufficient to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness. This has been extremely difficult with inflation and rising costs to keep doors open. With the exception of 2025, when shelter providers received one time funding from the State General Fund, funding has been not increased for 10 years. The current \$2.5M contribution is not a sustainable funding stream.

The \$1.5M increase would be a lifeline to emergency shelter providers across the State and will help bolster the services they are able to offer including a warm roof and safety, case management support and linkages to permanent housing. This funding is absolutely essential to a homeless response system that exists throughout the State by a team of dedicated providers who have demonstrated the effectiveness of their programs throughout the years. The homeless response safety net is well-established and effective, yet is at constant risk due to lack planned, sustainable funding mechanisms.

Last year, following years of significant underfunding, Maine lawmakers and Governor Mills threw us a lifeline. LD 698 provided about 4.47 million in one-time emergency funding to Maine's 40 qualifying shelters— temporarily increasing MaineHousing's Shelter Operating Subsidy from approximately \$7 to approximately \$19/bed per night of the estimated \$102 it costs to provide the bed and associated services.

And we are deeply grateful—it kept our doors open. But that lifeline is frayed. York County’s only adult shelter closed in May 2025. Others in Aroostook, Hancock and Oxford counties teeter on the brink. The truth is stark: without sustained, reliable funding, Maine’s emergency shelter network will collapse and shelters like ours will close.

This proposed allocation would replace about 1/3 of that lifeline while shelter directors and state legislators work to explore and adopt a fair and adequate funding stream that recognizes real costs of service and inflation and the essential services that shelters provide, like emergency rooms, fire departments, and police. The proposed \$1.5M increase to shelter operational support is substantial and essential to effectively support shelter providers and people experiencing homelessness across Maine

This is not abstract conjecture. When shelters close, families lose more than a bed. They lose their schools, doctors, jobs, and the fragile support systems that hold their lives together. For parents already in crisis, uprooting them from their communities is devastating—and costly. It drives families into hospitals, jails, and emergency systems that strain taxpayers far more than shelter ever would.

At Rumford Group Homes, we offer more than warmth and safety. We help families rebuild. We provide meals, showers, and laundry—but that’s just the beginning. Our staff spend hours each week helping parents navigate MaineCare, secure food, find transportation, and prepare for housing. We connect them to jobs, educational programs, and parenting classes. We partner with schools and child protective services. We stay with families even after they leave, because our goal isn’t shelter—it’s stability. The people we serve are not numbers—they are Maine families, and they are depending on us.

For Oxford County families, losing our three shelters would mean zero family beds. No backup. No overflow. No alternative.

This winter, as nights grow long and cold, Maine lawmakers have a rare chance to do what is both morally right and fiscally wise: provide a needed subsidy to help our shelters remain open and functional. Emergency shelters are essential infrastructure. We respond to crisis, meet basic human needs, and help people rebuild.

Hundreds of Maine families are counting on it. Keeping the doors open to Maine shelters is the right thing to do and the fiscally responsible thing to do.

The Governor’s proposed \$1.5M shelter subsidy is a step in the right direction to prevent our shelters that our citizens depend on from closing. Shelter providers continue to cut costs, stretch dollars and fundraise in addition to working with state lawmakers, but this temporary assistance will go a long way to bolster services until a long-term, fair funding method can be reached.

Contacts

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