

City of Portland | City Council
Kate Snyder, Mayor



To: Joint Select Committee on Housing
From: Kate Snyder, Mayor
Date: May 13, 2023
Re: Support of LD 1721

Distinguished members of the Joint Select Committee on Housing:

On behalf of the City of Portland, I'd like to offer our strong support of *LD1721, An Act to Create Transitional Housing Communities for Homeless Populations in the State.*

As Portland is the largest city in the state and a major service hub for providing social services, our city is currently providing emergency shelter services to roughly 1,200 people on a nightly basis. Those we cannot shelter have resorted to sleeping outside, regardless of weather or other hazards. We are at capacity in terms of what our facilities, programs, and staff can handle.

We currently operate an emergency shelter for single adults at the newly opened Homeless Services Center on Riverside Street, as well as our Family Shelter buildings on Chestnut Street. Along with Catholic Charities the City of Portland helps manage a hotel in Saco that houses families thanks to a partnership with MaineHousing. In addition, we are temporarily using the James A. Banks Portland Expo building as an emergency shelter for families.

Our Homeless Services Center (HSC) was designed to serve as an emergency shelter and as such provides a host of wrap-around, on-site services such as meals, health care, and social services. These services are tailored for circumstantially or chronically unhoused people so that individuals can be served with compassion and dignity and pathways are created to set them up for future success. While it is not intended for long-term stays, many individuals use it as such due to a lack of transitional housing in the state. As a result, it lacks the capacity needed to serve circumstantially or chronically unhoused individuals.

We are in desperate need for more transitional housing facilities for both families and individuals. LD1721 would create the Transitional Housing Community Construction Program Fund under the Maine State Housing Authority, and provide for the creation of 400 new units of transitional housing for families and 500 new units of transitional housing for individuals to serve them until they are able to find permanent housing solutions.

LD1721 would also direct the Maine Department of Health and Human Services to utilize its resources to coordinate, arrange or provide services, including job training and health care services, for residents of transitional housing communities. The bill also provides one-time

funding to the Maine State Housing Authority to create transitional housing communities and funding to the department to provide independent housing services that would support residents of transitional housing.

Given the dire need for more regional and statewide transitional housing facilities to serve people and families until they can enter the workforce and obtain permanent housing solutions, we ask that you approve LD 1721 without reservation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.