



May 12, 2023

Joint Select Committee on Housing  
Legislative Information Office  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

**RE: Testimony in support of LD1844 An Act to Support Emergency Housing Facility Construction, Renovation and Acquisition Statewide by Creating a Matching Grant Program**

Dear Senator Pierce, Representative Gere and Honorable Members of the Committee:

My name is Andrew Lardie and I am the interim Executive Director at Tedford housing. Tedford Housing is the primary provider of homeless prevention services and emergency housing in Sagadahoc, Lincoln, and northern Cumberland Counties.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of LD 1844, which if enacted would create opportunities to greatly mitigate homelessness and improve the collective quality of life in many Maine communities. Most homelessness in our region and state is situational, not chronic. For thousands of working families who have lower wages and don't come from wealth, the domino that might fall and throw their lives into real chaos is not the unexpected medical expense, loss of a job, or family disruption. It's the subsequent loss of stable housing. That is the top factor that impacts whether someone is able to pick up the pieces, or not.

For many of our neighbors facing awful circumstances, Tedford's case managers move mountains to prevent homelessness. Still, there has long been an overwhelming demand for emergency housing in our region. For years, Tedford has turned away 85-90% of the individuals and families that ask us for emergency shelter.

While we applaud efforts underway to address shelter system coordination, chronic homelessness, and the available stock of permanent housing, these efforts are necessary but insufficient to address the greatest statewide need. We cannot respond to situational homelessness without more emergency housing capacity.

Many of our communities have the wherewithal to face this challenge, but we need funding. Groups of concerned citizens are trying to create local solutions. For example the recently-formed Stepping Stone Housing in Damariscotta has energy and vision, but there simply is not funding to make their ideas a reality. The cost of adding sprinklers alone to make a building meet code for overnight shelter, will run \$150K-\$200K for a modest structure.

At Tedford Housing, we are shovel-ready on a 64-bed facility that will dramatically transform our overall capacity to advance our mission in the southern midcoast. Our new building was designed to be a lean \$4M a few years ago, and we have already raised that amount, but that price tag has doubled. Organizations like Tedford need more collective investment to meet this challenge.

LD 1844 is the most promising bill that I've seen this legislative session to enable the kinds of projects that will make the most impact around the state - providing stability to keep regular people's lives from unraveling in the wake of some shock. Please vote Ought to Pass on LD 1844, so Maine's emergency shelters can do their part in building healthy, productive communities.

Kind regards,

Andrew Lardie  
Interim Executive Director  
Tedford Housing