



STATE OF MAINE
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF POLICY INNOVATION AND THE FUTURE
181 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
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Testimony Neither For, Nor Against
L.D. 2138, Resolve, to Improve Funding for Homeless Shelters

January 23, 2024

Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and distinguished members of the Joint Select Committee on Housing, my name is Greg Payne and I serve as the Senior Advisor on Housing Policy in the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future. I am here today to offer testimony neither for, nor against **L.D. 2138, Resolve, to Improve Funding for Homeless Shelters**.

Our office has been closely engaged with all of the low-barrier shelters around the state since last fall and we agree that ensuring their continued viability should be a high priority. It is clear that the additional staffing requirements necessary to support the challenges that are unique to low-barrier shelters have created a structural problem that requires a collective response. The Administration is reviewing this issue as we work on the supplemental budget proposal, while also encouraging our partners to seek additional avenues of support that, together, could create a solution.

Given the close nexus between opioid addiction and the population that low-barrier shelters are serving – during one tour of a low-barrier shelter we were informed that 100% of the occupants were struggling through the nightmare of opioid addiction – we join the Committee in seeking assistance in solving this problem from the city, county and statewide entities now considering how to best deploy opioid settlement funds. While we explore ways that the state can take a lead role in ensuring that these critical facilities remain open, we should not need to do so alone. In addition to those settlement funds, we need to evaluate whether our partner communities continue to carry large unspent allocations of ARPA funds and if so, whether this may be a good time to consider being part of a team to prevent more unsheltered homelessness in our state.

We thank Representative Madigan for bringing this bill forward and look forward to working with members of the Committee and your colleagues to find a way forward. Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.