

Testimony of Jamie Dorr, Executive Director

On behalf of Midcoast Youth Center

**Before the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and
the Joint Select Committee on Housing**

**In Support of Parts GG and HH of LD 2214, An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and
Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds and to Change
Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal
Years Ending June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025**

February 23, 2024

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and members of the Joint Select Committee on Housing, my name is Jamie Dorr. I serve as the Executive Director and Founder of Midcoast Youth Center. I am here to testify in support of Parts GG and HH of the Governor's Supplemental Budget proposal.

Midcoast Youth Center & Skatepark is a teen center and community hub that serves over 650 young people between the ages of 10-24 each year. We are located next door to Bath's middle & high schools and within a 2-minute walking distance of two of Bath's largest and poorest neighborhoods.

Our programs aim to improve a young person's physical and mental wellbeing while offering long-term mentoring to increase post-secondary aspirations, whether college, career, or credentialing. We offer workforce development for ages 16-24 and target those who are less connected to traditional support systems, especially those who left high school without a diploma.

We provide homecooked dinners five days a week and a clothing closet with a free teen laundromat. MYC staff are Youth Mental Health First Aid trained mentors who connect youth with community and medical support, as needed.

We provide support to homeless youth ages 5-24 through our Merrymeeting Support Collaborative, a partnership between our organization and school districts Regional School Unit 1 and Maine School Administrative District 75. Together, this collaborative covers the geographic area of Sagadahoc County, Brunswick and Harpswell.

Many of the young people we serve struggle academically, have experienced significant childhood adversity, are youth of color, identify as LGBTQ, and face homelessness – they are also some of the most incredible young people you’ll ever meet.

At MYC we believe that every young person has inherent potential. Our job is to unlock that potential while empowering them to thrive. Over the past several years, we have worked very hard to create programs and services to meet previously unmet needs within our youth community.

Last spring, thanks to funding made available through the Emergency Housing Relief Fund, Midcoast Youth Center was awarded a grant of \$602,000. This funding was transformational for our youth community and allowed us to immediately fill a very wide gap in housing services, by enabling us to purchase a vacant office building adjacent to our teen center and convert the space into Transitional Housing, which serves up to 10 homeless young adults, ages 18-24, on any given night.

Today, the space has residential living on the top floor while supportive services such as group therapy, community navigation, workforce development, and mentors keep office hours on the first floor. For the first time in years, these young people have safety and stability in housing. It has allowed them to continue in their education, gain employment, obtain their driver’s license, and find a community of support.

I welcome you to visit any time to see what a tremendous impact this funding has had on some of Maine’s most vulnerable young adults. While we have been able to meet the needs of some of our young people, we have a waiting list of dozens more who need a solution like this. Funding of Parts GG and HH of the Governor’s Supplemental Budget proposal is crucial in addressing the housing crisis we are facing in Maine, especially for this age group.

I urge you to fully support LD 2214.

Thank you for your time,



Jamie Dorr
Executive Director