



**ADVOCATES:**

*Cheryl Harkins*

*Lisa Franklin*

*Mike Stuckmeyer*

*Jim Devine*

*Ben Martineau*

*Eric Brewer*

Good afternoon, Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development,

My name is Lisa Franklin, and I am a very grateful, housed resident of Portland, Maine. I'm a 52-year-old mother of 2 young adult children. I've lived through my share of hardships, as well as joyful times. One of those hardships includes a year of being homeless. In December of 2019, I worked up the strength to flee an abusive relationship. I had remarried someone who I had met in the recovery community, and to say he relapsed is an understatement. I was physically, emotionally, and financially devastated. I was broken, quite honestly, I just wanted to die.

I was fortunate enough to be directed to the Florence House, a women's shelter in Portland, but they had no available beds. The Milestone staff drove me to the Oxford Street shelter, and I began the intake process. Although it was overwhelming and somewhere I never would have imagined staying, it was in a homeless shelter where my journey of regaining my life began. While staying there, I was able to access the medical and social services that were crucial to rebuilding my relationships with my children and with myself. This journey has led me to becoming an advocate for the unhoused community standing before you today.

People of all ages, races, and genders experience homelessness for a variety of reasons. As the rate of homelessness continues to rise across our state, it is imperative that our homeless shelters remain funded and open.

Today I urge you to vote in support of LD 698, An Act to Sustain Emergency Homeless Shelters in Maine. It is truly a matter of life and death.