

State of Maine - 132nd Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development
Testimony of Andrew Lardie on behalf of Tedford Housing (Brunswick, Maine)
March 18, 2025

Supporting LD698, “An Act to Sustain Emergency Homeless Shelters in Maine”

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and members of the Committee on Housing and Economic Development:

My name is Andrew Lardie, and I am here on behalf of Tedford Housing. Tedford serves 40 towns and 150,000 residents in the southern midcoast through a range of programs to prevent homelessness and mitigate its impact. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of LD698, *An Act to Sustain Emergency Homeless Shelters in Maine*.

I’m also here with a group of shelter Directors who’ve been collaborating for months. Out of respect for the committee’s time, many of them are submitting testimony in writing but not in person - so I want to acknowledge all of my colleagues now - can all our agency reps please stand for a moment?

Today you have heard from other presenters about the serious threat facing the shelter network, and thus to our shared quality of life in Maine. You have heard how first responders count on shelters doing our part, so that they can do their part and be ready to serve the whole community. You have heard the numbers verified by MaineHousing’s Shelter Cost Study, of what it takes to provide shelter and get people back on their feet.

That study made it clear: this vital public health function is a lot more expensive to perform than the state has been paying. Whatever you think about the role of the state in supporting non-profits, the fact is: decent housing is a public good. And if this end of the housing spectrum is not sustained, the consequence is worse public health, more strain on the adjacent systems (eg hospitals, law enforcement, schools), a debilitated workforce, and a hobbled economy.

Emergency shelters are needed in communities across Maine to support people on their path back to housing. This bill won’t make operating an emergency shelter profitable, or even break-even, but what it will do is to help Maine’s shelters be more financially sustainable.

LD 698 is a critically important piece of legislation that will narrow the \$95 gap that shelters need to fill from other sources for every bed, every night. At Tedford our shelter expansion, which the community badly needs, means the Operations pie will be divided into even smaller slices. But our total government funding sources already leave \$59 per bednight to raise from philanthropy.

This funding will help keep Maine’s shelters afloat as we all navigate the state’s housing crisis. Today, on behalf of Maine’s emergency shelters and the people we keep warm and safe every night, I am asking the Housing & Economic Development Committee to vote in favor of LD 698.