



The Maine Coalition
to End Domestic Violence

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Testimony of Hanna Gregory on behalf of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence
Speaking in Support of LD 698: "An Act to Sustain Emergency Homeless Shelters in Maine."
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development
Date of Public Hearing: March 18, 2025

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and honorable members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee, my name is Hanna Gregory, and I am the Housing Services Coordinator at the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence (MCEDV),¹ testifying in support of LD 698: An Act to Sustain Emergency Homeless Shelters in Maine.

Together, Maine's regional domestic violence resource centers operate 12 low-barrier emergency shelters across the state, 11 of which are funded by Maine State Housing Authority's Emergency Shelter and Housing Program (ESHAP). DVRC shelters account for 26% of all ESHAP funded shelters. Some of the DV shelters are the only emergency shelter in their county. To support shelter operations, DVRCs receive funding through MaineHousing's Emergency Shelter and Housing Program (ESHAP), and LD 698 would provide much needed support.

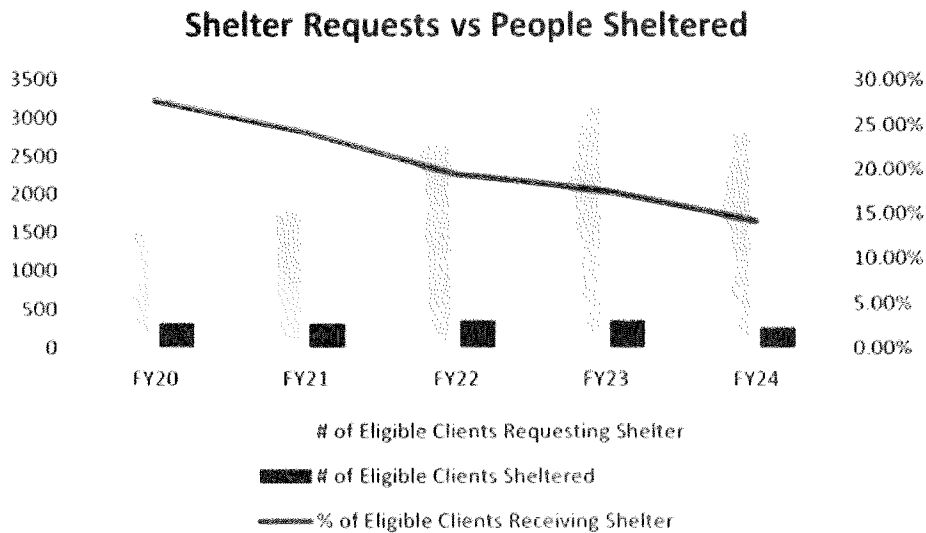
Survivors of domestic violence meet HUD's Category 4 definition of homelessness if the following is true:

Any individual or family who:

1. Is fleeing, or is attempting to flee domestic violence;
2. Has no other residence; and
3. Lacks the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing.

Many survivors reaching out for support and services in Maine meet this definition, as 99% of survivors experience some form of economic abuse and would be homeless if they were to leave their partner.² However, in 2024, Maine's DVRCs were able to shelter only 14% of the 2,820 survivors who reached out seeking emergency shelter. In total, DVRCs provided 25,078 emergency shelter bed nights for 324 adult survivors and 218 children. The number of shelter requests each year for many years far surpasses the number of survivors our network is able to bring into shelter. Maine's DV shelters are essential to the safety of one of Maine's most vulnerable populations. These shelters are often homicide prevention. Without additional funding, the ability to sustain our existing emergency shelter capacity is precarious. LD 698 would ensure that the doors remain open.

Picture 1: “FY24 Data Dashboard” MCEDV.³



“Maine’s Plan to End and Address Homelessness” acknowledges victims of domestic violence as one of the five groups of people experiencing homelessness in Maine.⁴ Many survivors that seek emergency shelter services are fleeing for their lives. Their abusive partners have made it their mission to find them at whatever cost, so that they can continue to instill fear and control. This period is often the most dangerous for a survivor. A person is more likely to be killed after they take step to separate (75% of women who are killed by a partner are killed after or during the process of leaving).

Maine’s regional DVRCs are equipped to answer these calls in the middle of the night, respond to the experiences of the survivor in a trauma-informed way, and work with a survivor to create a plan for their safety and to begin to address their needs. For some, this means coming into an emergency shelter. One aspect of Domestic Violence Resource Center shelters that sets them apart from other general homeless shelters is the need for an additional, particular kind of security. DVRC shelters need additional locks and security cameras, and have safety protocols to ensure that the location remains confidential and secure. Passing LD 698 would provide these eleven shelters with the funds needed to preserve this essential security.

This bill provides a critical increase in ongoing funds for emergency homeless shelters, which provide the initial emergency shelter assistance for unhoused people in Maine. The last time there was an increase in state funding for Maine’s emergency shelters was 2016. Nine years have passed, and the need for funding is more dire than ever before. Approving this bill will help Maine’s domestic violence shelters:

- Maintain their shelters;
- Pay for rent, fuel, insurance, and utilities;



MCEDV.

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- Support adequate security;
 - Offer nourishing food to adults and children;
 - Providing the shelter with necessary furniture, equipment, and supplies;
 - Sustaining shelter staff.

I ask you to prioritize the survivors of domestic abuse and violence who are living in Maine and counting on these services by supporting this \$5 million increase in Maine's shelter operating subsidy. Thank you.

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