

Testimony in Support of LD 698 – An Act to Sustain Emergency Homeless Shelters in Maine

Housing and Economic Development Committee – March 18, 2025

Presented by: Rosalani Moore

Good afternoon, Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee. My name is Rosalani Moore, and I am here today as both the Executive Director of H.O.M.E. Inc. a shelter serving Hancock, Washington and surrounding counties but also as someone who has personally experienced homelessness. I urge you to support LD 698, An Act to Sustain Emergency Homeless Shelters in Maine.

You have heard from shelter directors, advocates, providers, and individuals with lived experience today. You have heard the numbers—the \$102 it costs per night to shelter someone, the \$7.16 we currently receive for operations, and the \$19 per night we are asking for to prevent shelter closures. But I want to bring us back to what these numbers mean in real life.

What happens when shelters close? What happens when our bridge to permanent housing disappears? The answer is stark: More people will be sleeping in cars, in tents, or in places not meant for habitation. More individuals and families will be forced to make impossible choices between food, medicine, and a place to stay. And people like me—people who, through no fault of their own, find themselves without a home—will be left with nowhere to turn.

I wasn't homeless because I lacked education or the ability to work. I was homeless at 22 because my mother died, and I suddenly found myself responsible for my four younger siblings. We had nowhere to go. We needed stability, support, and community—things no young person raising a family should have to search for alone. A shelter gave us that. H.O.M.E. Inc. gave us that. It wasn't just a roof. It was a place where we found guidance, safety, and the steppingstones to stability through housing navigation. I can't say where I would be today without that support and early intervention.

Shelters do more than provide emergency relief—they build pathways to permanent housing that are critical. But those pathways cannot exist if shelters cannot afford to keep their doors open. The current funding model leaves 93% of shelter costs to be covered through donations, grants, and other patched together sources. For shelters like mine LD

698 is not just important—it is essential. Without this funding, shelters across Maine will be forced to reduce services, turn people away, or shut down entirely.

And while homelessness is often thought of as an urban issue, rural homelessness is just as real—if not more hidden. In rural Maine, there are no warming center on every corner, no sprawling networks of emergency services. When rural shelters close, there are no nearby alternatives. People are left in the woods, in unheated campers, or couch-surfing until their last option runs out. Our shelters are not just a resource; they are a lifeline.

Today, I stand before you as someone who found housing, built a career, and now works every day to help others do the same. But I was only able to do that because a shelter like H.O.M.E. Inc. was there for me when I needed it most. Now, we must ensure shelters can continue being there for others.

I urge you to support LD 698 and invest in the safety and future of our communities. Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer any questions.