



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Testimony of Rep. Rafael Macias introducing
LD 1179, An Act to Establish Minimum Safety Standards for the Construction and Use of Temporary Emergency Shelters
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development, my name is Rafael Macias, and I represent House District 51, which includes part of Topsham. I am here today to introduce **LD 1179, An Act to Establish Minimum Safety Standards for the Construction and Use of Temporary Emergency Shelters**.

I gratefully authored and sponsored LD 1179, a bill that speaks to both our values and our responsibilities, especially to those who have worn the uniform and now find themselves without shelter.

This bill establishes minimum safety standards for temporary emergency shelters, like the mobile units being built in Boothbay Harbor by an organization called Boothbay V.E.T.S.—Veterans Emergency Temporary Shelter. These are compact, insulated shelters on wheels. They come with electricity, heat, a portable toilet, a refrigerator, and even a microwave. And they're being placed where they're most welcome, on veterans' organizations grounds like the American Legions around the state, for veterans who would otherwise be on the street.

LD 1179 is not about red tape. It's about life and safety.

We have a duty to ensure that these shelters, while temporary, meet basic standards: safe heating systems, proper ventilation, and a way out in an emergency beyond just the front door. These are not luxury additions. They're the difference between a warm, survivable winter night and a fire hazard, between a lifeline and a liability.

But I also want to be clear about what this bill is not. It is not a tool for shutting down community-based responses to homelessness. It is not a license for municipalities to say "no" to emergency housing efforts out of fear or misunderstanding. In fact, it's the opposite. By providing clear, reasonable safety standards, we are giving local governments and nonprofits the confidence to say "yes."

Still, I recognize the concern that regulation, however well-intended, can sometimes have unintended consequences. That's why I support adding flexibility in implementation. I would like the rulemaking process to include a grace period, technical assistance, and most importantly—a clear path for

community groups to come into compliance without being punished for acting in good faith to help others.

I also urge that the Commissioner of Public Safety move swiftly to issue interim guidance while permanent rules are developed, so that organizations like Boothbay V.E.T.S. aren't left in limbo.

This is a Maine solution to a national crisis. And it honors our veterans, our volunteers, and our values.

Let's pass LD 1179 and build safety into our compassion.

Thank you.

