

Testimony in Support of LD 2124

An Act to Support Emergency Shelter Funding Using Revenue from the Real Estate Transfer Tax

Good afternoon **Chair Curry, Chair Gere, and members of the Committee.**

My name is Bob Staples. I am the President of the **Brett M. Staples Brain Disorder Awareness Coalition**, and I am here today in strong support of **LD 2124**.

Maine's emergency shelter system is under extraordinary strain. Shelters across the state are operating at or beyond capacity, funding is unstable, and staff are stretched thin. When shelters struggle, the consequences extend far beyond shelter walls—into emergency rooms, jails, and communities across Maine.

I want to be especially clear about who is most impacted by these funding gaps: people living with serious brain disorders, individuals experiencing acute mental health crises, and families with nowhere else to turn.

For many individuals with brain disorders, emergency shelters are not simply a place to sleep. They are often the last point of stability before someone becomes unsheltered, incarcerated, or hospitalized. When shelters lack reliable operating funds, these individuals fall through the cracks—at tremendous human and financial cost.

LD 2124 offers a responsible and balanced solution. It does not raise taxes or create a new revenue stream. Instead, it makes a modest, phased adjustment to the existing real estate transfer tax to support the shelter operating subsidy program administered by the Maine State Housing Authority.

Beginning September 1, 2026, 1% of the tax would be directed to shelter operations, increasing to 1.8% in August 2027. This phased approach

gives counties time to plan while providing shelters with predictable and sustainable funding. Even after this adjustment, counties retain more than 8% of the revenue to reimburse them for collection services.

Stable shelter funding is especially critical for people living with brain disorders. Symptoms are often worsened by stress, instability, sleep deprivation, and trauma. Properly funded shelters can offer safer environments, adequate staffing, and stronger connections to mental health and housing services—reducing repeated crises.

And it is important to state clearly: **serious brain disorders are not a choice**. When shelters are forced to reduce services or close beds due to funding gaps, those with the least control over their circumstances are harmed first.

LD 2124 is both compassionate and fiscally responsible. Preventing homelessness and crisis costs far less than emergency hospitalization, incarceration, or long-term institutional care.

On behalf of the Brett M. Staples Brain Disorder Awareness Coalition and the families we represent across Maine, I respectfully urge you to support **LD 2124** and help ensure that emergency shelters remain stable, humane, and accessible—especially for those living with serious brain disorders.

Thank you for your time and consideration.