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MAINE MAYORS COALITION
Strengthening Our Cities & Our State

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**Maine Mayors Coalition Testimony on LD 2124
An Act to Support Emergency Shelter Funding Using Revenue
from the Real Estate Transfer Tax**

Senator Curry, Representative Gere and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development, my name is Jeffrey Harmon, I'm the mayor of Auburn, and I'm here today representing the Maine Mayors Coalition in support of LD 2124, An Act to Support Emergency Shelter Funding Using Revenue from the Real Estate Transfer Tax.

The Maine Mayors Coalition is a nonpartisan group representing the mayors of eleven Maine communities – Auburn, Bangor, Biddeford, Lewiston, Portland, Rockland, Saco, Sanford, South Portland, Waterville and Westbrook – and nearly 300,000 residents. The Coalition advocates on behalf of our citizens and municipalities for policies that recognize the vital services Maine cities provide and the positive impact Maine cities have on our state.

Maine's housing crisis continues to directly impact each of our cities and is an issue of highest priority for our Coalition. Every day we see the human and economic consequences that come from the lack of housing supply and the rising costs of homes and rents. One of those consequences has been the serious increase in homelessness in Maine.

As mayors, our most immediate concerns and constant struggles are finding housing for people who need it now and providing them with essential support. The recent sub-zero weather forcefully reminds us all of the possibly dire consequences for vulnerable citizens and the critical need for emergency shelters.

Though unhoused populations may be larger in our cities, homelessness is not unique to us. Communities across the state experience it as well. According to Mid-Maine Homeless Shelter & Services, only 55% of its guests are from the Waterville – Winslow zip code. The organization believes its warming center shares similar numbers.

In 2025, nearly 80% of guests served at Portland's city shelters were not from the city itself. Portland's shelters housed more guests from other Maine cities and towns than it did from its own municipality. Over a quarter were Mainers from outside of Portland and a third were from out of the country.

At the Alter L/A Emergency Warming Center, almost a quarter of the guests are from outside Lewiston and Auburn. But municipal support for the Center is not proportional.

Lewiston and Auburn contribute close to a quarter of the Center's total funding. That means more than 90% of the Center's municipal funding comes directly from the two cities and their share of the county contribution. Less than 2% of the total funding is provided by the other 12 towns in the county through their county contributions.

Providing warm accommodations, and perhaps a sense of hope, to unhoused individuals, families and their children at a time when they are most in need should be a priority and a responsibility shared by the entire State.

The Maine Mayors Coalition extends our thanks to Representative Gattine for his work and supports LD 2124 to provide ongoing financial resources that will help sustain Maine's emergency shelters.

We appreciate the Committee's continuing work to address Maine's housing crisis, and we remain ready to lend our support to your efforts.