

PRESQUE ISLE POLICE DEPARTMENT

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Chris Hayes
Chief of Police



State of Maine – 132nd Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development

Testimony of Chris Hayes
Chief of Police, Presque Isle, Maine
February 3, 2026

In Support of 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 Chris Hayes, and I am the Chief of Police in Presque Isle, Maine. I am testifying today on behalf of myself and the community I serve in strong support of LD 2124, *An Act to Support Emergency Shelter Funding Using Revenue from the Real Estate Transfer Tax*. Thank you for the opportunity to share the perspective of local law enforcement on this important issue.

Homelessness has a direct and growing impact on the ability of my department to carry out its core mission: protecting public safety, maintaining order, and serving our community with professionalism and compassion. My officers routinely respond to calls involving individuals experiencing homelessness, often related to mental health crises, substance use, exposure to extreme weather, or disputes arising from lack of safe shelter. We work closely with our local homeless shelter and service providers to connect people with safe places to stay, especially during the winter months. When shelters are available and adequately resourced, law enforcement is better able to de-escalate situations, reduce repeat calls for service, and ensure that vulnerable individuals receive appropriate care rather than cycling through emergency rooms or the criminal justice system.

Stable and reliable shelter funding is essential—not just for those experiencing homelessness, but for agencies like mine that rely on a functioning shelter network to do our jobs effectively. If shelters are forced to reduce capacity or close due to unstable funding, the consequences will be felt immediately by law enforcement, hospitals, social service providers, and municipalities. Police officers are not housing providers, social workers, or mental health clinicians, yet without shelters, we are often left as the default responders to complex social issues.

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LD 2124 offers a responsible and sustainable funding mechanism to support emergency shelters across Maine. By ensuring the stability of the shelter network, this legislation helps law enforcement focus on preventing crime, responding to emergencies, and building trust within our communities—rather than managing the consequences of unmet basic human needs.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 2124, so Maine's public safety agencies can focus on their mission of protecting lives, maintaining public order, and serving our communities with dignity and effectiveness.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Hayes
Chief of Police
Presque Isle, Maine