

19 Colby Street
Waterville



Waterville, ME
04901

February 19, 2026

The Appropriations & Financial Affairs Committee
Office of Fiscal and Program Review
5 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and Honorable Members of the Committee:

Re: LD 2212: An Act Making Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2026, and June 30, 2027

My name is Dr. Katie Spencer White, and I am writing on behalf of the Mid-Maine Homeless Shelter & Services and the people we serve in Kennebec County and from around the state in support of LD2212.

Shelter operators like us are closest to the ground. We see—every day—how fragile Maine’s emergency response system has become, and **why ongoing, predictable funding** is essential to keeping people safe and keeping doors open.

I want to acknowledge how important last year’s one-year funding through LD 698 was. That support wasn’t theoretical for us. It kept shelters operating and prevented immediate crisis across the state—from the large rural regions served by Homeless Services of Aroostook, H.O.M.E. Inc., and Rumford Group Homes to service-center shelters like Mid-Maine Homeless Shelter.

But that funding was temporary. It was a band-aid, not a solution. Once those dollars are gone, we are back to the same place: nervous staff, nervous boards, and many of us relying on emergency credit from supportive banks just to keep the doors open.

The human suffering that results from shelter closures like the one last year in York County is incalculable. **A 2025 Stanford University studyⁱ showed that even temporary shelter access reduces crime, emergency room use, and mortality.** A 2021 study in the Journal of General Internal Medicineⁱⁱ demonstrated that **shelter saves the state more than \$31,073 per person every year in adjusted Medicaid spending when compared to the medical costs incurred by unsheltered people.** That means at just our shelter in Waterville, we saved MaineCare

“Providing Emergency Food & Shelter to Homeless and Displaced Persons in central Maine”
“Founded by the Interfaith Council in 1990”

at least \$4,288,074 in 2025. Across the state, the shelters represented by the Maine Shelter Network saved the state \$43.8 million in avoided MaineCare costs.

These results do not reside in our data, which is one of the key reasons it is so difficult for our sector to show you the quantitative proof that what we do matters. But the proof exists.

We are the third largest provider of shelter in the state behind the City of Portland and Preble Street, and the only low barrier shelter not in Portland or Bangor. Despite the irreplaceable contributions we make in Waterville and beyond, we remain at severe risk of closure because of chronic underfunding. LD 2212, in combination with LD2124, offers a vital solution to the crisis of shelter underfunding.

Keeping shelters open isn't just the compassionate choice. It's the fiscally responsible choice.

LD 2212 will help Maine keep its emergency shelter system functioning. Shelters are doing everything we can - stretching dollars, fundraising, relying on volunteers - but we cannot close a gap this large on our own. A stable state, local, and regional partnership is the only way to prevent further closures and keep Mainers safe.

Thank you for supporting a long-term solution for communities across Maine.

Warm regards,



Dr. Katie Spencer White
President & CEO
(207) 692-4421

ⁱ Christopher, D. A., Duggan, M., & Martin, O. H. (2025). *The Social and Individual Effects of Homeless Shelter: Evidence from Temporary Shelter Provision* (No. w34376). National Bureau of Economic Research.

ⁱⁱ Koh, K. A., Roncarati, J. S., Racine, M. W., O'Connell, J. J., & Gaeta, J. M. (2022). Unsheltered vs. sheltered adults experiencing homelessness: health care spending and utilization. *Journal of general internal medicine*, 37(8), 2100-2102.