

Jeffrey Cosgrove-Cook  
United Way of Midcoast Maine  
LD 698

My name is Jeffrey Cosgrove-Cook, and I am the Hub 3 Homeless Response Coordinator, serving the towns of Brunswick and Harpswell, as well as the counties of Sagadahoc, Lincoln, Knox, and Waldo. The majority of my work as Homeless Response Coordinator for the Midcoast region of Maine revolves around attempting to match people, both individuals and families, experiencing homelessness with permanent, sustainable housing. This position is grant funded through MaineHousing and requires me to work closely with partners across the State who provide direct services to people experiencing homelessness, services including emergency shelters, housing navigation, and case management to provide solutions to what is a growing and unprecedented issue in our State. According to data recently released from Preble Street, at least 9 emergency shelters have closed because of funding issues during the past 15 years, yet the need has consistently grown. Shelters located across the Midcoast, and across the state are currently at or near 100% capacity, and it is a difficult thing for the staff of these shelters to do when they are required to turn away people who are in need. Because of this misalignment of available of emergency shelter capacity and individuals in need it is an all too common thing that people experiencing homelessness within the Midcoast area resort to sleeping in their cars, in unheated sheds and camper, and in tents – even in the bitter cold of winter, anything simply to stay attempt to get out of the elements and stay alive. Emergency shelters in our state provide critical services to Mainers who desperately need our assistance. I am writing to ask your support for LD 698: An Act to Sustain Emergency Homeless Shelters in Maine so that emergency shelters within the State may continue to serve the vulnerable individuals and families who may be experiencing homelessness and assist them in finding a path forward toward housing stability.