

MAINE SERVICE CENTERS COALITION

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Testimony of the Maine Service Centers Coalition LD 698, An Act to Sustain Emergency Homeless Shelters in Maine

Senator Curry, Representative Gere and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development, the Maine Service Centers Coalition is submitting testimony in support of LD 698, An Act to Sustain Emergency Homeless Shelters in Maine.

The Maine Service Centers Coalition, comprised of 26 towns and cities across the state, articulates the importance of healthy and thriving service center communities, advocates for public policy that supports and contributes to the economic and social viability of our communities, and collaborates with municipal officials, legislators, state agencies and nonprofits to pursue quality of life for all who live and work in our state.

As you well know, homelessness continues to be a serious issue across our state. Our service center communities are acutely aware of its impact with so many individuals and families turning to our cities and towns in search of housing. We appreciate the work undertaken during the last session by your predecessor committee and the Legislature seeking to address Maine's housing shortage, which has exacerbated the state's homelessness issue. Unfortunately, this issue will persist until those programs take effect.

An important part of addressing homelessness is providing sustainable funding that ensures municipalities and organizations have the resources necessary to provide shelter and services to unhoused Mainers. LD 698 would provide emergency homeless shelters just such a sustainable funding source.

If passed, the bill would allocate \$5 million each year to these shelters, which have been operating at capacity. The dedicated revenue would help ease the ongoing financial pressures emergency shelter operators face. Rather than constantly searching for funds to remain open, they would be able to focus on providing desperately needed beds. This would give our communities a modicum of relief in our ongoing struggles to locate housing for families and individuals whose only other option may be sleeping on the streets.

We respectfully urge you to support emergency homeless shelters and our service center communities by voting ought to pass on LD 698.

Thank you for your time.