

Ann Dodd-Collins
Portland
LD 698

Senator Chip Curry, Representative Traci Gere, and members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee

I urge you to vote Ought To Pass on LD 698, An Act to Sustain Emergency Homeless Shelters in Maine.

I live in Portland, Maine and when I go downtown I see people sleeping in doorways. I also see them in encampments and in parks. Not too long ago two homeless persons were found frozen to death in the woods behind my place of worship. These scenes are not unique to Portland. We, as a state, are not doing a very good job of caring for our homeless neighbors.

Maine's emergency shelters provide critical care and services to vulnerable individuals and families. With the growing homelessness crisis in our state, shelters across Maine are struggling to match the need, leaving far too many people no choice but to sleep outside and in places not meant for human habitation. If even one shelter closes, it will strain an already overburdened system and worsen this crisis, leaving more people to compete for fewer resources, including shelter beds, housing navigators, and critical life-saving services.

Maine's emergency shelters have faced rising costs from inflation and had to expand services to keep communities safe during the pandemic, but Maine's Shelter Operating Subsidy has remained the same since 2016. LD 698 will critically increase this contribution from \$7 to \$18 a bed per night, helping to ensure Maine's emergency shelters remain open, accessible, and professionally operated.

Maine needs and deserves safe and accessible emergency shelters that can meet the needs of the growing number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness in our state. LD 698 will help to make this a reality.

Please vote Ought To Pass on LD 698.