

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF LD 698**  
**AN ACT TO SUSTAIN EMERGENCY HOMELESS SHELTERS IN MAINE**

**Tuesday, March 18, 2025**

**Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and the esteemed members of the Committee on Housing and Economic Development.** My name is Megan Gean-Gendron, Executive Director of York County Shelter Programs – York County’s only emergency adult and family shelter. I am submitting this testimony in support of LD 698 An Act to Sustain Emergency Homeless Shelters in Maine. I am deeply concerned about the state of our emergency homeless shelters, as they play a critical role in providing basic needs, stability, and hope to some of Maine’s most vulnerable citizens. However, the funding allocated to these shelters is far from sufficient to meet the actual costs of providing safe and supportive housing at a time when the State of Maine is faced with a homelessness and housing crisis putting even more of a demand on this critical services.

Currently, homeless shelters in Maine are funded at a rate of only \$7.16 per night per individual. This amount is far below the actual cost of providing shelter and services, which averages around \$102 per night per person. This funding gap creates immense challenges for shelters to deliver the quality of care, support, and services that our community members in crisis so desperately need and leaves emergency homeless shelters to raise 93% of their budgets from other sources. This is unsustainable and has put the shelter system at great risk with multiple shelters around the state with soaring deficits and a threat of closure.

The disparity between the allocated funding and the actual cost of running a shelter impacts the services that are essential for people experiencing homelessness. Without adequate funding, shelters are forced to reduce staff at a time when we need to increase the number of beds in shelters, limit access to services such as case management, mental health support, and addiction recovery programs, or even turn people away when they are most vulnerable. This, in turn, leads to higher rates of individuals and families becoming unsheltered or facing long-term instability.

Homelessness is not just a housing issue; it is a complex, multi-faceted problem that requires coordinated responses across housing, healthcare, mental health, addiction services, and employment support. Without sufficient funding for shelters, the broader network of services becomes less effective, and individuals remain trapped in a cycle of crisis. For some, this could mean their homelessness becomes chronic, with lifelong impacts on their physical and mental well-being.

The \$7.16 per night per person is not nearly enough to address the full scope of the challenges that shelters are facing. Maine’s shelters need adequate funding to ensure they can provide not only a bed for the night but also the comprehensive care and services that will help individuals get back on their feet and rebuild their lives. LD 698 could increase that operational gap from \$7.16 per night to \$19 per night of the \$102 cost of that bed.

I urge this committee to recognize the critical role shelters play in our communities and to consider increasing funding to help save the Maine Emergency Shelter system which is currently in crisis. This funding will be critical to the survival of shelters across Maine – including ours. By doing so, we are not only addressing homelessness; we are fostering a stronger, healthier, and more compassionate Maine for everyone.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and for your service to the people of Maine.

Sincerely,

Megan Gean-Gendron  
Executive Director, York County Shelter Programs  
207-274-8161 or [megang@ycspi.org](mailto:megang@ycspi.org)