

Sarah LeClaire  
Woodland  
LD 698

Members of the Committee: My name is Sarah LeClaire. I am a resident of Woodland, Maine. I am submitting this testimony in support of LD 698: "An Act to Sustain Emergency Homeless Shelters in Maine." I have worked as an attorney in Aroostook County since 1984. I served with Pine Tree Legal Assistance as a staff attorney in Presque Isle until 1995. The PQI homeless shelter was started by community members, including the wonderful Sister Mary O'Donnell in the '80s to address the desperate need for shelter, safety and support to persons dealing with homelessness in Aroostook County. It is a vital resource for our community and provides compassionate services to those most in need. Besides providing shelter, staff advocate for and connect shelter residents & families to services available to them to meet specific needs and to transition to stability where possible. I know from my contact and working with many persons who have utilized shelter services over the years how absolutely necessary it is that we maintain this resource in Aroostook County- both for the benefit of the persons who find themselves in need of help, and for the community itself. I cannot imagine losing this resource- the only shelter in Aroostook County. I cannot imagine raising children in a community that has no place for those most in need. To have to tell our children that persons suffering hunger and homelessness are not welcome. I urge you to pass this bill. Thank you for your consideration.