

Ian Lynch
Waterville
LD 698

Committee Members,

My name is Ian Lynch, I'm an ordained minister serving the First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ in Waterville. In my role I am painfully aware of the extent, and sadly, the recent increase in the number of those who are homeless in our community and state. When a person is homeless they effectively reside nowhere and everywhere at once, making them neighbors to us all. It is far too easy to ignore these neighbors who work harder to survive day to day than most of us will ever experience.

During the 1980s and 90s, I had the privilege of serving homeless people as director of a shelter in Salem, Massachusetts. We set out with the goal of our own obsolescence, with wild optimism that the problems faced were of a manageable size. All these years later, that shelter continues relentlessly meeting needs. None of that would have been possible with significant public support. Thankfully, our financial burden was limited to a 10% match from the private sector. It boggles my mind that shelters currently operating in the state of Maine must raise more from the private sector than we counted on from our state contract. The work of literally saving lives is hard enough without constantly worrying about meeting payroll and keeping the lights on.

Frankly, it is morally reprehensible that we can't promise the least of these, our siblings, the most basic of safety nets. As a taxpayer, I should be able to assume that the common good is the primary budgetary goal. This bill, though far from sufficient, is an absolutely vital step in the right direction. I trust that you will vote that it ought to pass, perhaps with a suggestion that more needs to be done.