

Testimony of Courtney Chasse on behalf of Hope and Justice Project in Aroostook County Maine  
Speaking in Support of LD 2124: “An Act to Support Emergency Shelter Funding Using Revenue  
from the Real Estate Transfer Tax.”

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development  
Date of Public Hearing: February 10, 2026

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and honorable members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee, my name is Courtney Chasse, and I am the Executive Director of Hope and Justice Project (HJP) the Domestic Violence Resource Center in Aroostook County Maine, testifying in support of LD 2124: An Act to Support Emergency Shelter Funding Using Revenue from the Real Estate Transfer Tax.

Hope and Justice Project operates 3 out of the 12 emergency shelters in Maine for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, stalking and sexual assault. All 3 receive funds from Maine State Housing Authority’s Emergency Shelter and Housing Program (ESHAP) which only covers around 24% of our shelter operating costs.

HJP operates 3 emergency shelters throughout Aroostook County (one in southern, northern and central) due to the vast size of the county. Having multiple shelters allows for survivors and their children to maintain their much, needed support systems such as family, counselors, schools, during one of the most dangerous times for them, as a person is more likely to be killed after they take steps to separate (75% of women who are killed by a partner are killed after or during the process of leaving). Besides shelter, survivors are able to utilize all of HJP’s services, such as court advocacy, safety planning, individual advocacy, cps/dv liaison services, children’s advocacy, and financial empowerment. In FY 2025, HJP sheltered 71 people for a total of 5086 bed nights.

Some shelter guests upon exit said:

“This is amazing and so much appreciated for all the kindness and help you guys have given me.”

“I was afraid to call and kept putting this off. If I would have known how supportive and helpful you all would have been I would have called much sooner.”

“I am acutely aware of what you do and all of the things that you help with. When I first reached out, I was just crying and crying and I was so consumed with the abuse that I wasn't thinking about food or a shower and you talked with me until I was calmer and offered me a shower and food. I couldn't even think about my basic needs at that point but you all did.”

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LD 2124 would provide an ongoing increase to the state's core operating subsidy for shelters that has not been increased since 2016. This would allow our shelters to operate with a more stable, predictable revenue source that grows with inflation: the real estate transfer tax.

Domestic violence shelters are homicide prevention services, thus providing adequate funding does not only help to save lives, it reduces both human suffering and public costs. LD 2124 would ensure that the doors remain open.

I ask you to prioritize the survivors of domestic abuse and violence who are living in Maine and counting on these services by supporting LD 2124. LD 2124 gives Maine a practical, fiscally responsible way to keep its statewide emergency shelter system functioning. A stable state, local and regional partnership is the only way to prevent further shelter closures and keep Mainers safe. Thank you for your attention to this urgent need, and for supporting a long-term solution that works for communities across Maine.

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