

# **MAINE SERVICE CENTERS COALITION**

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## **Testimony of the Maine Service Centers Coalition LD 2124, An Act to Support Emergency Shelter Funding Using Revenue from the Real Estate Transfer Tax**

Senator Curry, Representative Gere and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development, the Maine Service Centers Coalition is submitting testimony neither for nor against LD 2124, An Act to Support Emergency Shelter Funding Using Revenue from the Real Estate Transfer Tax.

The Maine Service Centers Coalition, comprised of 27 towns and cities across the state, articulates the importance of healthy and thriving service center communities, advocates for public policy that supports and contributes to the economic and social viability of our communities, and collaborates with municipal officials, legislators, state agencies and nonprofits to pursue quality of life for all who live and work in our state.

Homelessness continues to be a serious – and statewide – issue, exacerbated by Maine’s housing shortage. Our service center communities are acutely aware of the severity of the issue since many individuals and families turn to our cities and towns in search of housing and essential support. We work closely with municipal and nonprofit shelters to locate emergency housing for children and adults whose only other option may be sleeping on the streets during these frigid nights with temperatures dipping well below zero.

Sadly, Maine’s emergency shelters are operating at capacity. As they focus on providing desperately needed beds, they also are forced to constantly search for funding to remain open. Often, it falls to service center communities to help fill that financial gap.

Regardless of where they are located, Maine’s shelters serve every city and town across the state. Data from Homeless Services of Aroostook, the shelter located in Presque Isle, indicates only 20% of its guests are actually from that city. The remaining 80% are from other municipalities throughout the County, some of which do not contribute to the shelter’s operations.

Our Coalition appreciates Representative Gattine’s effort to provide a dedicated revenue stream for emergency shelters. However, we do not support the funding method proposed in LD 2124. Reducing the counties’ share of the real estate transfer tax would redirect counties’ losses onto our service center communities and ultimately, our property owners whose tax dollars already help keep shelters open.

This bill moves Maine in the right direction, but we need to find a more equitable and sustainable revenue stream – one that is shared by all Mainers, not just those living in

service center communities – to house our most vulnerable citizens on the coldest of nights.

Thank you for your time and attention to our concerns.