



Permanent Commission RACIAL, INDIGENOUS & TRIBAL POPULATIONS

Testimony In Support of LD 2124 ***An Act to Support Emergency Shelter Funding Using Revenue from the Real Estate Transfer Tax***

February 10, 2026

Senator Curry, Representative Gere and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development, my name is Sam Zuckerman. I am the Policy Coordinator of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous, and Tribal Populations. I am here today on behalf of the Permanent Commission's Policy Committee to testify in support of LD 2124, "An Act to Support Emergency Shelter Funding Using Revenue from the Real Estate Transfer Tax."

Every Mainer should have a safe, affordable place to call home. But too many Mainers struggle to find even the bare minimum housing. Maine had the nation's lowest rental vacancy rate as of 2023 at 2.1%.¹ And with rising costs for homeownership and stagnating wages,² Maine now faces a housing market where people searching for a basic necessity for survival do not have meaningful options. And without any other option, many people become unhoused - this impacts Mainers of color at disproportionate rates to white Mainers. 31.6% of Maine's unhoused population come from Black communities, despite those communities making up only 1.7% of the overall state population.³

By adequately funding our shelter system, unhoused Mainers generally but Black Mainers and other Mainers from marginalized communities especially will be able to continue to

¹ US Census Bureau (2023). Quarterly Vacancy and Homeownership Rates by State and MSA. Table 1. Rental Vacancy Rates by State: 2005 - present. <https://www.census.gov/housing/hvs/data/rates.html>

² Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous, and Tribal Populations. 2024. State of Racial Disparities Report. Pages 3-4. https://www.pcritp.me/sites/pcritp.me/files/inline-files/State_of_Disparities.pdf

³ MaineHousing. (2025). 2025 Point in time count. https://www.mainehousing.org/docs/default-source/policy-research/research-reports/homeless-reports/2025-point-in-time-report.pdf?sfvrsn=9bab9c15_6

rely on the stability of a warm place to sleep while we build a system where homeownership is more accessible and where affordable rental units are more abundant. But shelters do so much more than just provide a place to sleep, they also provide wraparound services that help Mainers get housed, employed, and cared for. All of these services are foundational to getting people out of homelessness quickly and sustainably. And once people are housed, access to other basic needs like food, health care, and employment becomes much easier to sustain.⁴

While there are many dimensions to Maine's housing crisis, the acute need right now is to make sure that every Mainer has a warm and safe place to sleep. Funding our state's shelters is a vital first step before we tackle the bigger systemic issues at hand. Thank you for your time and attention. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

⁴ Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous, and Tribal Populations. 2024. State of Racial Disparities Report. https://www.pcritp.me/sites/pcritp.me/files/inline-files/State_of_Disparities.pdf