

Mayor Rollins, Augusta  
Mayor Casavant, Biddeford  
Mayor Cayer, Lewiston  
Mayor Snyder, Portland  
Mayor Glaser, Rockland



Mayor Doyle, Saco  
Mayor Mastraccio, Sanford  
Mayor Pride, South Portland  
Mayor Foley, Westbrook

## Testimony of Kate Snyder

### In Support of LD 48

*“Resolve, To Require the Department of Health and Human Services To Request a Waiver Relating to Support Services and To Provide Funds to Prevent Homelessness”*

March 24, 2021

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Kate Snyder and I am the Mayor of Portland. I am here today on behalf of the Mayors’ Coalition to testify in support of LD 48.

The Mayors' Coalition is a nonpartisan group formed in 2012, and currently includes the Mayors of nine Maine communities - Augusta, Biddeford, Lewiston, Portland, Rockland, Saco, Sanford, South Portland, and Westbrook – with a combined population of nearly 250,000. The Coalition advocates for state and federal policies that recognize the important role that Maine cities play in providing vital services to Maine people across our state, and the positive impact Maine cities have on the economic strength of our state. The Coalition seeks to work in partnership with Maine’s state and federal elected officials to meet the needs of Maine people.

Our communities, like so many communities in Maine and across the country, were struggling to meet the needs of those experiencing homelessness before the pandemic, and the situation has only grown more dire over the past year. The Mayors’ Coalition has made addressing housing and homelessness one of its top policy priorities this year. We thank Representative Brennan for sponsoring this bill to address this urgent need.

The legislation proposes to require the Department to apply for a federal Medicaid waiver that would allow Medicaid-funded direct support services to individuals experiencing homelessness. The Coalition also appreciates that this bill seeks to provide ongoing funding to the Housing First Assistance Program within MaineHousing to be distributed to community action agencies to assist individuals on the verge of losing their housing.

There are nearly 2,100 people experiencing homelessness in our state every night.<sup>1</sup> Data from a recent 10-year study conducted in Boston, Massachusetts shows that those experiencing homelessness face a mortality risk of nearly three times higher than those who have dependable access to shelters.<sup>2</sup> As cities,

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<sup>1</sup> Housing and Urban Development, Office of Community Planning and Development. “The 2020 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress,” (January 2021) 90. <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2020-AHAR-Part-1.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2CijL1pKh6-qogOMLiUTVMARNYyTUwwsUtdTzLcLGvWSvMNJMCyphNyk4>.

<sup>2</sup> ScD Jill S. Roncarati, “Mortality Among Unsheltered Homeless Adults in Boston, Massachusetts, 2000-2009,” JAMA Internal Medicine (JAMA Network, September 1, 2018), [https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/article-abstract/2687991?utm\\_source=STAT%2BNewsletters&utm\\_campaign=9a7921362e-MR\\_COPY\\_09&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_8cab1d7961-9a7921362e-150680301&appId=scweb](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/article-abstract/2687991?utm_source=STAT%2BNewsletters&utm_campaign=9a7921362e-MR_COPY_09&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-9a7921362e-150680301&appId=scweb).

we have been bearing an outsized role in addressing the needs of those throughout Maine who find themselves unhoused and in need of services and housing. We urge the committee to pursue a variety of measures to ensure that the needs of Maine residents who are in need of these services are addressed in a comprehensive fashion.

This legislation is a key step in a larger effort of addressing the homelessness crisis in our state. We urge you to support LD 48. Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.