



Testimony of Julia Kimball
Property Manager for Volunteers of America Northern New England
LD 1076, An Act To support the Operations of Youth Shelters in Maine

4/1/2021

Senator Claxton, Senator Daughtry, Representative Libby and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

My name is Julia Kimball and I am testifying in support of LD 1076 on behalf of Volunteers of America Northern New England (VOA). VOA is a statewide nonprofit and faith-based organization dedicated to serving those in need. I serve as a property manager for a permanent housing project designated for previously homeless veterans. Prior to my current position, I worked for an organization that was a family shelter as well as worked in the Homeless Initiatives Department for MaineHousing that oversees homeless youth projects.

VOA strongly supports Maine and the Department of Health and Human Services in increasing funding in support of homeless youth shelters.

Shelters across the state of Maine struggle for funding. They are constantly having to seek multiple funding streams including ESHAP (Mainehousing Emergency Shelter Housing Assistance Program). The ESHAP which part of the funding formula for this is based on bed numbers served, state funding, donations, and grants. Some large adult shelters operate on what is referred to as a night-by-night shelter. These are a first come first serve basis each day. This type of programming is not conducive for children. The size of and youth shelters are often smaller than adult shelters because they may have to operate with a smaller number of beds to provide quality care and stability for children.

The homeless youth population face struggles very different than those of adults experiencing homelessness. They are still required to ~~be~~ attending school, may not be old enough to work and provide for themselves, as well as experiencing histories of recent traumas ~~they have experienced~~ in their homes or surrounding environments. These, as well as, other special factors play a part in creating challenges to permanent housing for youth experiencing homelessness.

Additional funds allocated by this legislative group could allow for additional qualified staff, more beds to serve a larger number of children, as well as longer follow up supports when the youth have been successful in transitional or permanent housing placement. Shelters are a part of a spectrum of critical services that often result in family reunification or the location of other family members or alternative guardians and referrals to youth transitional housing programs. Increased investments in shelter services will help to divert youth from sexual exploitation and the stress, trauma, and emotional disruptions that follow survival on the street.

Thank you for considering my remarks in your review of LD 81, and thank you for your sacrifice of public service to the citizens and communities of Maine.

Julia Kimball

Volunteers of American Northern New England