

April 8, 2021

Name: Bridge Semler

Maine Statewide Youth Action Board Specialist

In support of LD 1076

An Act to Support the Operations of Youth Shelters in Maine

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and appreciated members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Bridge Semler and I am testifying in support of LD 1076 An Act To Support the Operations of Youth Shelters in Maine. I facilitate the Maine Statewide Youth Action Board (YAB). The YAB is a group of young leaders who have been directly impacted by housing instability, who advocate for much needed change in the ways that we show up for unhoused youth. Some members wished to be at the hearing today in support of LD 1076, but the timing didn't align. In the past I've worked in direct care positions at multiple shelters, including the SAFE Alliance in Austin, Texas, which is an Emergency Shelter for Youth and Young Adults. This shelter had a 30 day stay with the option to extend. I watched youth get a semblance of their bearings at the shelter, before they had to move on. Please extend the length of shelter stay from 30 to 90 days. More time is needed, for so many reasons. I will spare you all my feelings about how much I wish every person born into this world could be automatically guaranteed shelter and safety. How I wish no one had to experience the trauma of housing instability. How I wish that youth going into a shelter setting could know what safety feels like and have security in understanding what's next for them. Unfortunately, they don't get this common experience. Just think about that for a minute. Think about the young ones that you love, and powers out-of-their-control leading to them needing an emergency shelter stay. Does 30 days feel like enough time to you? Please extend shelter stay from 30 to 90 days. Thank you and take care.

Bridge Semler
New Beginnings - Maine Statewide Youth Action Board

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