

Office of the City Manager

Testimony in Support of LD 2136
An Act to Provide Financial Support for Shelters for Unhoused Individuals

Senator Teresa Pierce
Representative Traci Gere
Members of the Joint Select Committee on Housing

I am Steven Buck, City Manager of Sanford, and I offer Testimony as supported by the Sanford City Council in support of LD 2136 for Emergency Shelter Funding.

The City of Sanford has adopted the York County Committee on Homelessness priorities around Homelessness. The top priority in that Advocacy is for full financial support of the pre-existing shelter beds within York County to prevent the further diminishment of essential services and capacities seeking to address the needs of unhoused people within our City. Emergency Shelters statewide are in risk of closure due to lack of sufficient funding to continue operations. The York County Shelter Program, serving all of York County, is one such Shelter that lacks adequate funding to even maintain current levels of beds and services. LD 2136 seeks to bridge the gap in operational funding to maintain these essential shelter services. Emergency Shelters are a best means for coordinated entry into permanent housing options and case management of our unhoused population.

The number of unhoused people in Sanford has risen from 10 in 2021, to 41 in 2022, to now over 155 in December of 2023. Our City has created a 4-Person Mental Health Unit within the Sanford Police Department dedicated to addressing unhoused, mental health, and substance use disorder, and actively partners with York County Service Agencies and the York County Shelter Program for case management and housing options. The strategies that worked in 2021 are no longer working in 2023 due to INSUFFICIENT CAPACITIES, the most pressing of which is shelter services, followed by mental health beds and substance abuse beds. It is widely known that unless a person has shelter and stability, they cannot address the impacts of becoming unhoused and their homelessness is extended, as seen in our statistics.

Sanford has dedicated all available resources at the local level towards people who are unhoused. The City established the Mental Health Unit, engaged a prior elementary school as a warming shelter, meets bi-weekly with a Homeless Task Force of regional service providers around coordinated case management and services, has administered over \$1.0 M in General Assistance per annum towards the unhoused or to potentially become unhoused, has adopted LD 2003 standards, and has engaged not less than 360 new units of housing using Tax Increment Financing for public-private partnerships for a continuum of housing.

City Manager: Steven R. Buck

City Council: Becky A. Brink, Mayor | Maura A. Herlihy, Deputy Mayor |

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Our City is engaged and is using all tools allowable to address the capacity needs of our unhoused populations. It is therefore incumbent to again emphasize our City's support of LD 2136 for the State to provide the much-needed funding for Emergency Shelters statewide in recognition that Shelter is our greatest limiting factor to address our unhoused populations. Our Shelters not only provide a roof, security, and essential needs, but they are the key portal towards more permanent and sustainable housing as a means to lessen the exponential increase of homelessness in our State.

The City of Sanford supports the essential funding for Emergency Shelter Services within LD 2136.

Submitted on behalf of the Sanford City Council
Steven R. Buck
City Manager, Sanford