



January 23, 2024

Joint Select Committee on Housing
Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: Testimony in support of LD2136 An Act to Provide Financial Support for Shelters for Unhoused Individuals

Dear Senator Pierce, Representative Gere and Honorable Members of the Committee:

My name is Andrew Lardie and I am the Executive Director at Tedford Housing. Tedford Housing is the primary provider of homelessness prevention services and emergency housing in Sagadahoc, Lincoln, and northern Cumberland counties.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of LD 2136, which if enacted would give Tedford and many of our counterparts in Maine's shelter network a fighting chance to function sustainably amid increased costs, increased demand for services, and reductions in other government support both to shelters, and to the neighbors we serve.

To start I want to convey the stakes of Tedford's sustainability. The United Way's ALICE study¹ found in 2023 that in Tedford's catchment area - the 40 towns and 150,000 residents who live near the coast between Portland and Rockland - 26% of households were working but had incomes too low to afford a basic "survival budget", while another 9% lived below the federal poverty line. For households like these, last year Tedford's case managers provided homelessness prevention services and outreach case management; emergency shelters for adults and for families; and permanent supportive housing at six locations. But despite serving hundreds of individuals and families through these programs, Tedford turned away many hundreds more due to lack of capacity.

Several forces have combined to put unprecedented strain on Tedford's finances. While inflation has increased costs across the board, and demand for emergency housing skyrockets, our revenue was stunted by a 2023 MaineCare rule that cuts off access to section 13 Targeted Case Management reimbursement 90 days after a person exits emergency shelter. This eliminates a key funding stream for both Tedford's outreach case management and our permanent supportive housing program, which requires ongoing case management to keep people from becoming unhoused. The only government funding stream left to support our supportive housing program is an \$8000 annual allocation from HUD. Also in 2023, reductions in SNAP benefits have shifted a burden onto Tedford to provide more support for clients, including our supportive housing case manager working on food assistance with tenants who previously handled their own nutritional needs.

Added to these headwinds is the basic arithmetic of shelter funding, in a time when shelters are being urged to expand. Tedford will break ground this year on a new facility to address more of the enormous unmet need for emergency housing in the southern mid coast region. As shelters add capacity to Housing Inventory Count (HIC) statewide, proportional funding increases will be needed just to prevent the per-bed funding rate from dipping below its already inadequate level.



By shoring up our shelter network, LD 2136 will invest in the futures of our neighbors, giving more Mainers a fair chance to lead healthy, productive lives. Please vote Ought to Pass on LD 2136, so Maine’s emergency shelters can do their part in strengthening our communities.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Lardie".

Andrew Lardie
Executive Director
Tedford Housing

1. United Way of Mid Coast Maine. (2023). “ALICE in Maine: A Study of Financial Hardship.” <https://www.UnitedForALICE.org/Maine>