

Dianne "dee" Clarke  
Portland Me

Dear distinguished member of the Committee on Labor and Housing,

My name is dee Clarke, and I am resident of Portland and the founder of Survivors Speak USA.

Survivors Speak urgently asks you to vote in support LD 211: An Act to Support Emergency Shelter Access for Persons Experiencing Homelessness. This critical legislation would allocate \$3 million in additional funding to homeless shelters in Maine, helping them provide their life-saving services to our most vulnerable neighbors, including survivors of human trafficking/sexploitation.

The shortage of affordable housing, a lack of mental health and substance use disorder services, and the COVID-19 pandemic have created a crisis in Maine, forcing more people experiencing homelessness to go unsheltered, in sometimes life-threatening temperatures, without a safe place to stay.

When individuals cannot access emergency shelter, it prolongs the amount of time they are homeless. This leads to worse overall outcomes for those individuals, added strain on our public health system, and more financial costs to our communities due to increased use of emergency services.

For people I know and work with everyday, not accessing emergency shelter could translate into not being able to to escape being sexploited.

For these reasons, I am asking you to vote in support of this much needed bill so that everyone can access safe and dignified shelter.

Thank you for your time,  
dee Clarke