

Debby M
Portland

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Sylvester, and members of the Committee on Labor and Housing. My name is Debby M and I am staying in a safe haven at Florence House. I am writing to testify in support of LD 211, An Act To Support Emergency Shelter Access for Persons Experiencing Homelessness in Maine, which would provide more funding for low barrier emergency shelters to increase their capacity.

The Oxford Street Shelter in Portland is a great example of why we must dedicate more funds to emergency shelter. Oxford Street provides lifesaving and life-sustaining resources to those it serves, but its physical infrastructure serves as a testament to why we need LD 211. The building itself, which originally was a private home on a small plot of land in a residential neighborhood, has been leased by the city of Portland for shelter use. The use of this private home as a public shelter has led to deterioration of the physical structure. Further, lack of financial resources also restricts the case management and day services the shelter is able to provide. These services are just as important as overnight bed space.

Elderly folks, such as myself, face specific challenges and barriers in access emergency shelter. Expanded funding would allow shelters to address issues such as accessibility, that are important to folks of my age.

As someone who has used emergency shelters in Portland, and elsewhere, I am here to say that we need LD 211. Low barrier emergency shelters save lives. Thank you.