

Carolyn Silvius
Portland

Good morning Senator Rafferty, Representative Sylvester, and members of the Committee on Labor and Housing. My name is Carolyn Silvius and I live in Portland. I am here today 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.

For ten months in 2016 I experienced homelessness. I was lucky enough to find emergency shelter at Florence House, and I believe that being there saved both my sanity and my life. However, others are not as fortunate. Some find a place to get out of the elements during the night, but not in the daytime. It is just as easy to die from exposure during a frosty day, as it is at night. Others are unable for various reasons to access shelter at all. Many are unaware of their options that would take them out of the cold and snow, and need to be informed, and in a few cases, coached to take advantage of these lifesaving facilities. However, many shelters struggle to sustain the funding needed to provide this outreach and keep the front door open. As it stands now, the shelters that do exist are brimming over. Those in need are straining resources that are in place already. Recognizing your duty to your constituents to let no citizen suffer needlessly or die from lack of shelter, I implore you to vote in favor of LD211. This bill would increase the funding to those shelters and warming centers that currently exist, allow some shelters to increase capacity, and take some of the burden off cities to which those from towns without shelter options travel.

Already this year we have had community members die from lack of shelter, and there is still a much inclement weather left before winter is over. In our climate, shelter is not only a human right, it is a lifesaver. Please vote in favor of LD 211.