

Dear Maine Legislature Members,

Today I am writing to you on behalf of LD 773. I am currently in my senior year of the social work program at The University of Maine. I am currently in a social work class that focuses on social advocacy. As a part of this class, my group has decided to look at the issue of homelessness and housing in this country. During our research into this issue, we came across this bill and felt the need to write a testimony to support it. Please consider this testimony when making your decision on this bill.

Housing and homelessness are issues experienced by nearly every group of people in this country. Poverty is one of the reasons for homelessness in this country, and in this country the largest group of impoverished people are children. It seems highly unfair that children, who are dealing with development, education, and socialization, must also struggle to have a safe place to sleep at night. The government should be in the business of supporting families and children, rather than hindering them in their pursuit of safe housing. No individual should not know the experience of having a safe place to live.

Here are some statistics regarding the homeless population within the state that you represent and are sworn to serve. According to the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, over 2,000 individuals were experiencing homelessness on a given day in 2020. Beyond this, 206 of this group were individuals in family-based households. Raising a family is one of the most challenging things that someone can do. Families are already facing the fallout of COVID-19, the current gas price issue, and are fielding questions from their children about the strife between Russia and Ukraine. Why should families also have to face the challenges of not knowing where their children will sleep at night and if their children will still be able to attend school if they are in temporary housing, such as hotels or shelters.

This act will not solve the problem of homelessness in this country, or even in this state, but it will help some families who do not have the time to wait for a grand solution. As lawmakers, you are in a privileged position to use your power to help those who most need it. Children and families need your help, right now. Not a moment should be wasted. Do what you were elected to do, serve the individuals in your community by assisting them in their time of need, as you would hope another individual would do for you. I implore you to act with kindness, act with compassion and vote to pass this bill. I thank you for your time and consideration, may my words stay in your minds, but most importantly, your hearts when you vote on this matter.

Thank you,
Emma Williams, BSW Student

