

130th Maine Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government

Testimony of Erik C. Jorgensen, MaineHousing, in support of

**LD 1300: An Act to Require County Governments to Coordinate with Municipalities
to Create plans to Address Homelessness**

16 April 2021

Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack, members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Erik Jorgensen, Director of Government Relations at the Maine State Housing Authority (MaineHousing).

MaineHousing has been helping Maine people own, rent, repair, and heat their homes since 1969. MaineHousing is an independent state authority created to address the problems of unsafe, unsuitable, overcrowded, and unaffordable housing. We are authorized to issue bonds to finance single-family mortgages for first-time homebuyers and for affordable multi-family housing.

We are also authorized to administer a number of state and federal programs including rental subsidies, weatherization, fuel assistance, two housing block grants, the low-income housing tax credit program, and homeless grant programs. We receive state general fund revenue for homeless programs and receive a dedicated portion of the real estate transfer tax for the Housing Opportunities for Maine (HOME) Fund.

I am here today to speak briefly in favor of LD 1300. This compact but important bill is one that will help to advance the work of Maine's Statewide Homeless Council as they forge ahead on their ambitious homeless system re-design, an initiative with the goal of getting homelessness to zero in our state.

Service center communities have long borne the brunt of the problem of homelessness, yet this is a problem that every town in Maine has role in, as well as a responsibility to help solve. By adding a county-level planning element to a process that has, until now, been approached either locally or statewide, this bill will help assure that the critical middle level of government is a participant, and that the eventual solutions are truly regional.

As the organization that underwrites the operation of 36 shelters in Maine, MaineHousing is well aware of the strains placed on all parts of government by homelessness, a problem that has only grown more acute during the Pandemic. We are encouraged to see the dozens of providers, shelter operators, social service organizations and governmental entities who are working together to find a comprehensive and

durable solution to this problem. This is a small but important part of that work, and I hope you will choose to support it.

Thank you.