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55 Portland Street
Portland, ME 04101
207.775.0026
info@preblestreet.org
www.preblestreet.org



United Way
of Southern Maine



Good morning, Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and members of the State and Local Government Committee,

My name is Annika Moore, and I am the Advocacy Team Leader at Preble Street. I am writing today to support LD 731, An Act to Prohibit Municipalities from Barring the Creation of Homeless Shelters.

Maine is experiencing a crisis-level shortage of shelter and housing. LD 731 supports expanding the state's emergency shelter system to meet the growing need. In January this year, the utilization rate at Portland's largest shelter, the Homeless Services Center, was 98.84%. In other words, almost every bed was filled every night for the entire month. Most other shelters across the state are also close to or at capacity. Shelters are equivalent to emergency rooms for people experiencing homelessness, and when people have nowhere safe to go, emergency shelter should always be an option. With beds filling up though, it is becoming increasingly common for shelters to have to turn people away, even on the coldest or rainiest of nights.

The housing crisis impacts individuals and families in all parts of the state. This fact can often be obscured by the lack of shelters in certain areas. Currently, there are zero shelters in Franklin, Lincoln, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Sagadahoc, and Waldo counties – that is more than one-third of the counties in Maine. In January 2025, over half of the individuals arriving at the Homeless Services Center in Portland came from a Maine town other than Portland. Barring the creation of homeless shelters does not eliminate the need for them; it merely means that anyone needing a shelter bed must travel long distances to access one.

This bill will help ensure that emergency shelters are an option for individuals in municipalities across the state. At a time when housing options are limited and more people are becoming unhoused, we must create emergency shelters in neighborhoods across Maine. Please vote in favor of LD 731.

Thank you for your time and consideration.